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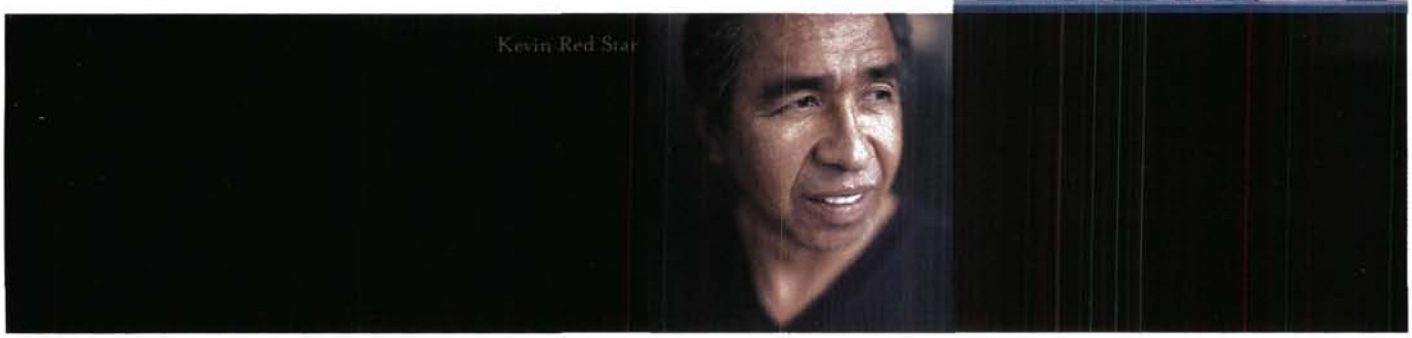

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Authority figures

TO THE EDITORS:

I found Noam Scheiber's "Class Act" (June 25) very interesting—particularly its description of Chris Matthews and Bill O'Reilly's redefining "working class" as a shared cultural orientation based on 1950s standards of male responsibility, patriotism, Catholic school deference to authority, and what used to be called the "Protest-Protestant" work ethic. Scheiber tells us that Matthews and O'Reilly grew up in middle-class families and were educated in Catholic suburban high schools and Catholic colleges. But these men are linked by another word, which Scheiber never mentions: Irish.

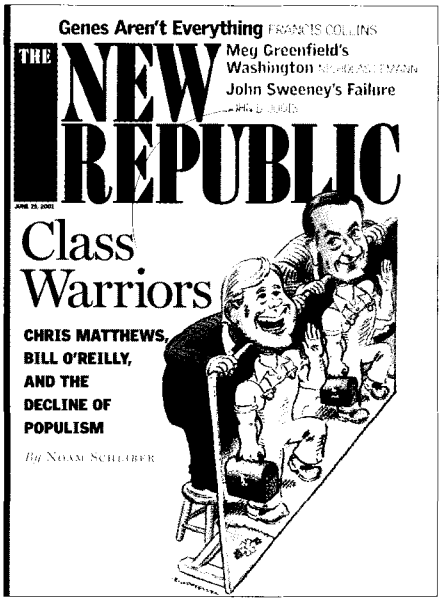
O'Reilly—and, we are told, "to some extent, Matthews—honestly see themselves as separate from an alien, hostile elite" that looks down on them for their traditional American Catholic values and education. Scheiber thinks this is "a delusion," which reminds me of the considerable number of Irish-American academics—some solid Catholics, some post-Catholic P.C. leftists—who play with the (false) notion that Irish Catholics in nineteenth-century America were treated as "almost black." Whereas Irish-American historians circa 1900 typically boasted of the rapid rise of their people in this country, the contemporary fashion is to speak of continuing discrimination and victimhood.

ROBERT ST-CYR
Greenlawn, New York

TO THE EDITORS:

I was glad to see Noam Scheiber puncture the myth of Chris Matthews and Bill O'Reilly as heroes and spokesmen of the "working stiff." Each represents a right-wing wolf in a populist sheep's clothing. This total focus on American working-class social values rather than economic interests has been an effective tool for the election of conservative politicians since the days of Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew. If middle-income people voted their pocketbooks, the GOP would never win elections outside wealthy neighborhoods for which the recently passed tax cuts are windfalls. Scheiber missed the correct conclusion, however, in not explaining why Matthews and O'Reilly avoid mentioning working-class economic issues: Discussing true economic interests of blue-collar Americans is not what TV network owners pay their talking heads to do. If they dared do so, they would not stay on the air.

DOUG WEISKOPF
Cincinnati, Ohio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Meg Greenfield's Washington
John Sweeney's Failure
THE NEW REPUBLIC
Class Warriors
CHRIS MATTHEWS, BILL O'REILLY, AND THE DECLINE OF POPULISM
By NOAM SCHEIBER

Third way

TO THE EDITORS:

I didn't expect in-depth treatment of the British general election in a journal dedicated to American politics, but I do admit being disappointed in the commentary provided by Andrew Sullivan ("Blair Play," June 25). Sullivan falls into the trap of describing Britain's politics as consisting of just two parties, dismissing all other parties as regional idiosyncrasies. Sullivan didn't even mention the third major party in Britain, the Liberal Democrats, despite the fact that they arguably had the best relative result of the election. The LibDems (usually characterized as left of center, but today seemingly more radical than Labour) were supported by nearly one in five voters and are represented in all regions of Great Britain. In this election they obtained 52 seats (their best result since 1923) and, with the 166 Tories, split two-thirds to one-third against the European Union. In yet another leadership crisis, the LibDems may well turn out to be the only real opposition to Tony Blair. Maybe they're worth a line or two in a description of the election result.

MARTIN J. BALL
Professor of Communicative Disorders
University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Labor gains

TO THE EDITORS:

John B. Judis's June 25 article, "Labor's Love Lost," fails to recognize two very important dynamics. First, there has been more change in the labor movement during the past five years—since John Sweeney took office—than since the creation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations and the organizing of the 1930s. Second, the crisis in organizing and in labor-movement growth—developed over a period of five decades—resulted from manifold causes and will not be remedied or reversed in five years. Sweeney has shown strong and consistent leadership in addressing the structure of the movement; devoting resources to organizing; and strategizing for growth in the political arena and in collective bargaining. The progress being made is unprecedented.

JOE UEHLEIN
Takoma Park, Maryland

Blue genes

TO THE EDITORS:

The timing of "Heredity and Humanity" (June 25), by Francis S. Collins, Lowell Weiss, and Kathy Hudson, is curious, coming after trumpeted articles in *Nature* and *Science* describing the (almost) complete sequencing of the human genome. Why did Collins, Weiss, and Hudson wait until now to discuss the complexities of genetic knowledge? Were they afraid that an accurate description of the limitations of gene-disease associations would erode support for public funding of the genome sequencing effort? The imperfect correlation between genotype and phenotype is hardly news, though genomics boosters have been reluctant to expose the complexity of the relationship.

A second issue is that the genome effort has been sold to politicians and to the general public on the basis of its promise for new therapies (or even cures) for dread diseases. Nevertheless, the prophets of the genomic revolution have failed to seriously explore the implications of the existing track record for transforming gene-disease associations into therapies or cures. For example, in 1989 Collins helped to identify the genetic locus associated with the disease cystic fibrosis (CF), a worthy achievement by any measure. While this genetic association has improved diagnosis, twelve years later it has yet to be translated into major improvements in treatment for CF. Even more dramatic is the situation for sickle cell disease. Despite our having precise knowledge (at the level of the codon) of the genetic mutation associated with sickle cell disease since 1957, rational drug-based therapy remains a distant goal. Many similar examples of gene-disease associations that have failed to yield treatments could be cited.

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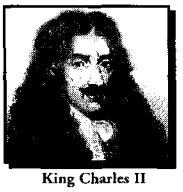
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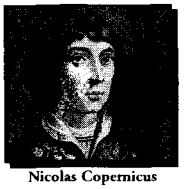
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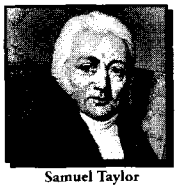
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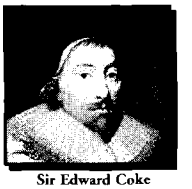
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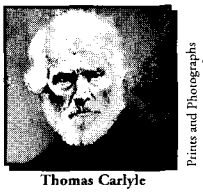
Thomas Carlyle

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DANIEL ROBINSON is a distinguished Research Professor of Psychology at Georgetown University since 1971. Since 1990, Professor Robinson has lectured in Philosophy at Oxford University, where he is a Faculty Fellow at Linacre College. He is past president of two divisions of the *American Psychological Association: The Division of History of Psychology* and the *Division of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology.* He is editor of the *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology.*

He is author or editor of more than 40 books, including *Wild Beasts & Idle Humours: The Insanity Defense from Antiquity to the Present* (Harvard 1996), *An Intellectual History of Psychology* (3rd edition, Wisconsin, 1995), *The Mind: An Oxford Reader* (Oxford, 1998) *and Aristotle's Psychology* (Columbia, 1989).

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FROM WASHINGTON

Negatives

THIS SEPTEMBER WILL witness the first-ever conference devoted to the thought of political philosopher Michael Oakeshott. It took long enough. Oakeshott was one of the most original thinkers of the twentieth century—but his skepticism of activist government made him a pariah for most of his lifetime. Along with Friedrich Hayek, he championed individual liberty against the benign, rational welfare state when that state was at its apex in the 1950s and '60s. When I wrote my doctoral dissertation on Oakeshott in 1989, just before he died, I was amazed to find that mine was only the second ever accepted on the subject by a university political science department anywhere.

Among Oakeshott's heresies was the notion that government should sometimes be judged not on what it does but on what it resists doing. Unlike many "conservative" theorists before him, Oakeshott was completely reconciled to a liberal polity, in which pluralism was the highest value. But, unlike many "liberal" theorists, he also believed the modern state was a deep threat to such pluralism. Its inexorable growth, fueled by the confidence that many human problems (poverty, hatred, inequality) could be resolved by rational analysis and government action, was a threat, in Oakeshott's view, to civilized life. Activist governments imposed crude solutions unsuited to the complex societies they presided over. Worse, every accretion of state power came inevitably at the expense of private individuals engaged in chaotic but often productive attempts to make their own lives—and those of others—better. So Oakeshott disdained the easy arrogance of Great Society liberals and appreciated the spontaneous forms of order that free societies can create if left to themselves.

I hesitate to invoke Oakeshott in any contemporary political debate, since his views on such things were as quirky as his philosophy was complex. But I do think Oakeshott presents a useful paradigm for an early assessment of the presidency of George W. Bush. To the modern liberal, Bush is anathema. Because he hasn't aggressively used government to "solve" the problems that worry many liberals, he seems almost willfully obtuse. That's why *The New York Times*' editorials and most of the paper's columnists view him as stupid, evil, or a tool of vested interests. How in the world, they wonder, can he stand by while the Earth warms, seniors need cheap drugs, and campaign finance corruption could be abated by a simple stroke of the pen? How can we take him seriously when his public utterances have yet to stir the country to some new goal or glittering future, and when his casual utterances have all the coherence of a seven-year-old's? He is, in this view, a political nonentity, a smug and self-serving cipher, an unpresident.

But invert this worldview, and you see something else. The evil tax cut—which dared to return to taxpayers their own money at a time when federal tax revenues are at record highs—is essentially a negative act. It's a preemptive strike against the inevitable attempt by politicians to use future surpluses for their own ends: to create new entitlements and shore up old ones. Bush knows, as most conservatives do, that in the modern era this is a very hard dynamic to slow, let alone reverse. The instant gratification of a new entitlement is far more comprehensible than the greater but more diffuse achievements of a freer society. The only argument that has ever really worked against this expansion of government power is the phrase "We cannot afford it." So Bush's first act—and one for which future generations will thank him—was to throw a fiscal monkey wrench into the schemes of those who want the state to be even bigger and to control the lives of even more people.

The same politics of restraint helps explain Bush's position on global warming. Other countries, much further down the path of liberal statism, are happy for experts to devise a fix to a problem and then to impose it by fiat. But an Oakeshottian would be skeptical of any solution proposed by approved experts—especially when it entails a drastic change in the lives of millions of nonexperts. He wouldn't dismiss the problem but would take incremental steps that didn't entail widespread disruption. On campaign finance, such a conservative would be skeptical of any instant answer to the eternal problem of political corruption. On Social Security, he would prefer to maximize the wisdom of millions, by giving people more control over their investments, rather than buttress a one-size-fits-all solution devised decades ago.

Bush's presidential style is also of a piece with his instinctual conservatism. If government is not about remaking society but about presiding over it, then there is no need for "new deals," "new frontiers," "third ways," or what have you. There is simply the discrete act of governance, enforcing laws, making small adjustments in areas where laws and institutions have been outstripped by social change: amending immigration laws to deal with new influxes, moving toward missile defense, reaching out to new demographic groups, and so on. So far, Bush shows every sign of knowing his role is limited. His personal modesty is in line with his political restraint. He is a conservative in the mold of Coolidge or Baldwin—men whose qualities took some time to sink in.

In America, this low-key conservatism doesn't have deep roots. The Constitution shoulders some of the strain of restraint. At times of crisis, Americans are used to demanding strong leaders—and conservatives have responded by co-opting former Democrats like Ronald Reagan or real radicals like Newt Gingrich. But in times of calm and wealth, especially after the Clintons, Bush's quiet virtues might find an audience. (Of course, if we hit a serious recession, all bets are off.) He won't even need the Dick Morris mini-initiatives that kept Bill Clinton afloat—because, unlike Clinton, Bush doesn't have to portray himself as an activist president.

The good news for liberals is that Bush's approval ratings are not sky-high, and his grip on an electoral majority is white-knuckled. The bad news is his stability. For six months, his ratings have stayed at around 57 percent. His recent dip, blared across the front page of *The New York Times*, was just a blip and has now corrected itself. The average approval rating in Bush's first quarter was 58 percent; in the second, it was 56 percent—within the margin of error. Compare this solidity with the variations in his father's ratings over the first six months—an average of 57 percent in his first quarter compared with 64 percent in his second—or with Bill Clinton's, whose ratings went from 55 percent to 44 percent in the same period.

Moreover, 70 percent of Americans approve of Bush as a person, compared with 60 percent in January and 65 percent in February—a sign that the more people have seen of Bush, the more they like him. Of course, if you view job approval as more significant than personal approval, these statistics are not so important. But if part of the rationale for Bush's presidency is precisely his post-Clinton decency, then these numbers suggest real durability. Maybe the people out there appreciate this quiet Oakeshottian. And perhaps, as happened in Texas, that understated appeal will only grow and grow.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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Spiritual Poverty

THE DEBATE OVER faith-based services has filled this summer's airwaves with lots of questions: Can religious groups fight poverty better than government can? Can they take government money without violating the separation of church and state? How does government decide what's a legitimate religion and what's not? In other words, there's an impassioned debate about how the government should direct its anti-poverty funds.

And there's almost no debate about how pathetically meager those funds are. The budget Congress passed in May, modeled on President Bush's proposal, increases "discretionary spending"—the part of the budget not devoted to entitlement programs and paying off debt—by only 4 percent this year. That's barely more than inflation. And since most of the increases come in education and medical research, and since the population is growing, that means programs aimed at the poor are actually being *cut*. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (a liberal group, but one with a reputation for honest number-crunching) estimates that, over ten years, taking into account inflation but not population growth, Bush's budget will reduce nondefense discretionary spending by $45 billion. This in the era of compassionate conservatism.

Of course, federal anti-poverty policy can't be measured simply by the size of the checks Washington writes. Back in the early '80s, the editors of this magazine were among the first to propose gutting the federal welfare system and replacing it with a strict, work-based program to break the cycle of poverty. But we also insisted that, to be done right, such an anti-poverty strategy requires *more* money, not less. Unfortunately, beneath the Sturm und Drang about religion, less is what we're getting.

Consider what's in store for the Child Care and Development Fund block grants. Funds from that program help low-income families get child care, which is essential for single mothers trying to move off public assistance and into the workforce. Appallingly, these days only 15 percent of families eligible for such assistance actually receive it; in some states, the waiting lists are tens of thousands of people long. Bush has proposed cutting the program by $200 million, which could leave an additional 50,000 families without subsidies.

Likewise, Head Start, which provides low-income families fully subsidized, high-quality preschool, deserves a funding increase. And it almost certainly won't get one. Head Start's great virtue is that it fights poverty two generations at a time: It helps working parents by providing them with day care, and it equips low-income children with some of the social and educational skills they'll need to compete at school and in the job market. But the president proposes spending about 2 percent less per child than last year. Already the program serves only half the eligible population. The Bush proposal would mean dropping an additional 2,500 kids.

And then there's the most glaring need of all: health care. Like child care, health insurance is essential for families trying to move up the income ladder. But the entry-level jobs that represent the first step into the workforce frequently offer no coverage, which is why there are 27 million low-income Americans without health insurance today. For the last few years, Democrats have been trying to use the budget surplus to begin solving the long-deferred problem of the uninsured. But the ten-year budget allocates just $28 billion for that task. (By comparison, during the presidential campaign, Al Gore proposed spending $146 billion on the uninsured over the same period.) Even worse, the money is conditional: It probably won't be available if the little budget surplus that's left disappears, as seems increasingly likely.

In fairness, the budget does have a few increases: more money for public schools and a partially refundable child tax credit. But those don't represent anything like a serious effort to fight poverty. Which is why congressional Democrats—who've been spending their time attacking the faith-based initiative on church-state grounds and focusing their economic agenda on the middle class—need to change their focus. Sure, the faith-based initiative needs protection to ensure against religious coercion. But by making that their main objection, Democrats cede Bush the high ground on poverty itself. Why not offer the administration a grand bargain? Democrats will let religious groups compete more easily for government funds (with reasonable safeguards) if the White House promises significant new funds for child care, the uninsured, and Head Start. Democrats can say they are happy to invite all the armies of compassion onto the battlefield, as long as we give them the means with which to fight. ■

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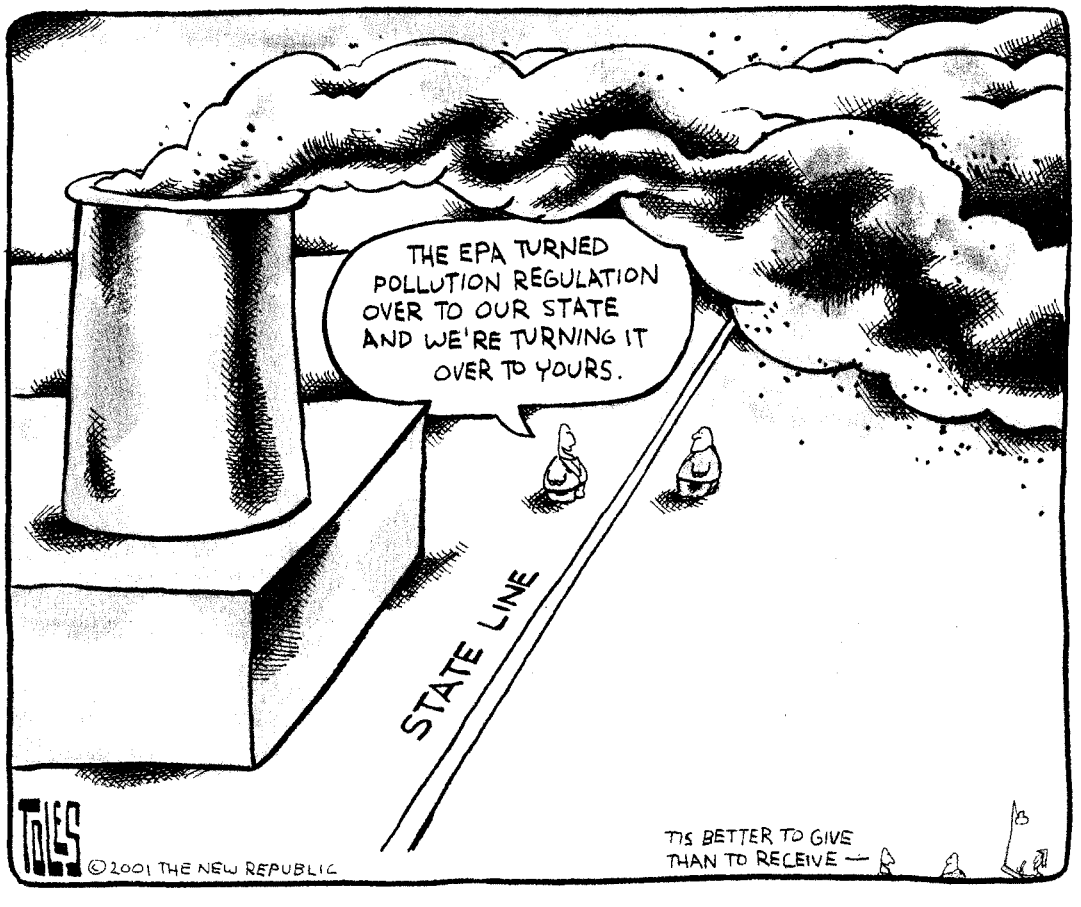
N O T E B O O K

STRAW MAN: When George W. Bush was running for president, a central element distinguishing his "compassionate conservatism" from traditional conservatism was his call to use government to encourage charitable works. Specifically, Bush promised to enable taxpayers who do not itemize—primarily those who don't have high incomes—to get tax deductions for charitable contributions. Bush presented this shift as an issue of fundamental fairness. "We will give people who don't itemize the same treatment and incentive as people who do, rewarding and encouraging giving by everyone in our society, not just the wealthy," he declared. And while the deduction did not represent a lot of money compared with, say, estate tax repeal, it still represented a real commitment of resources, which Bush also portrayed as a moral imperative. "It is not enough to call for volunteerism," he preached. "Without more support and resources—both private and public—we are asking religious charities to make bricks without straw." But once Bush took office, the charitable deduction was soon competing for resources that could instead go to upper-income taxpayers. So it was left out of the tax cut Bush signed in June. Now, the House of Representatives is trying to include it in Bush's faith-based initiative. The trouble is, of course, that the tax cut has left the budget strapped. So Bush's GOP allies have stripped down the charitable deduction from $84 billion over ten years to $6.3 billion—one-thirteenth of its original size. The squeeze means that charitable deductions will be limited in the first year to $25 of total donations. This means that a taxpayer in the 15 percent bracket would enjoy a *maximum* deduction for charitable contributions of $3.75. As Bush press secretary Ari Fleischer explains, "[T]he president was successful in getting much of what he sought." The scandal here isn't that Fleischer is lying. It's that he's telling the truth.

OBSERVATION POINTS: Yasir Arafat left Camp David last summer with two objectives: intifada and "internationalization." The Americans, after all, had failed to deliver every last petty piece of his maximalist plan for Palestine. They had even suggested that Israel's offer of almost everything was a momentous diplomatic breakthrough: imagine! And so the violence started—and there started also the Palestinian Authority's attempt to enlist the European Union and the United Nations on its truculent side. Nothing matters more for the internationalization of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than the introduction of "international observers," a.k.a. "independent observers," onto the scene. They will, it is alleged, bring "stability" to the region, which in the real world means an impediment to Israel's freedom of action in its own defense and a shield for Palestinian terrorism. An international force in Palestine is Arafat's fondest wish; and it is no surprise that the European Union and the United Nations—independent observers all—are ready to roll. What is genuinely surprising is that the United States seems willing to play along. In Ramallah recently, Colin Powell suggested that the United States had no fundamental objection to this exceedingly lousy idea. Having frayed America's relations with Europe in a variety of ways, the secretary of state threw the Europeans the sop of Israeli security. Later Powell tried to complicate his endorsement of Arafat's strategy, but then the defense minister of Israel clouded the situation further by intimating that Israel might allow CIA officials to perform such an intermediary role, thereby conceding the principle. Doesn't anybody remember anything about the career of "international observers" and U.N. forces in the Middle East and elsewhere? Who any longer knows the Straits of Tiran? But never mind the 1960s: the experience with UNIFIL in Lebanon in the 1980s and 1990s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should be all we need to know. Anyway, there already exists a "Temporary International Presence" in Hebron, and it has accomplished exactly nothing. If the Palestinians really want an end to the violence and a political settlement with Israel, they should do a little independent observing of their own and conclude that their fate is in their own hands. For what the Israelis are concluding from their own independent observations about Palestinian behavior is that they, the people who less than a year ago agreed to a Palestinian state on almost all of the occupied territories with a capital in Jerusalem, should watch their backs.

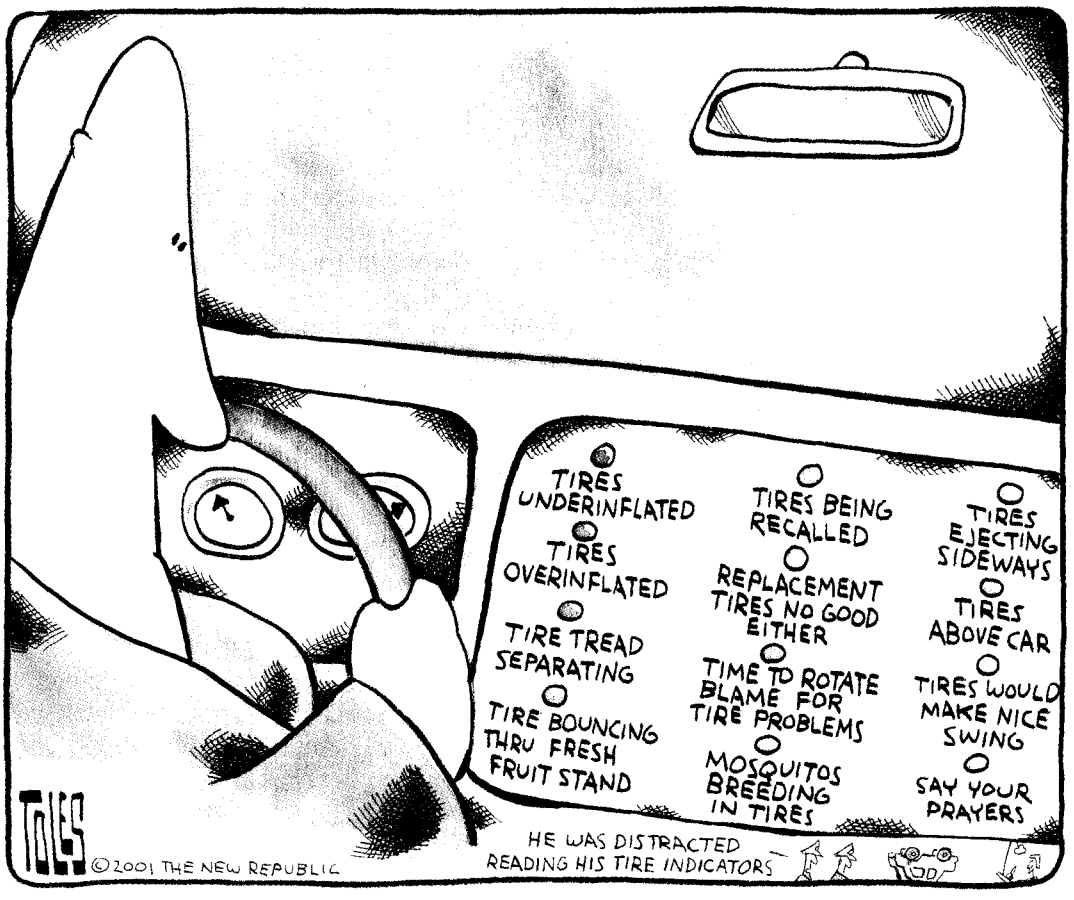
BANNED IN BOSTON: Judging from the bouquets thrown his way by the editorialists at *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, you'd assume that being a national champion of campaign finance reform has been good for Massachusetts Representative Marty Meehan's career. You'd be wrong. In fact, the campaign finance fight has brought Meehan's career to the brink of ruin—and the villain isn't Dennis Hastert or Tom DeLay. Rather, it's a fellow Massachusetts Democrat: Thomas Finneran, speaker of the state House. Earlier this month, Finneran proposed a state redistricting plan that summarily eliminates Meehan's House seat—even though Massachusetts isn't losing any seats overall. Finneran said he was just trying to create a majority-minority district in the Boston area, but most observers saw a less noble motive: payback for Meehan's support of the voter-approved Clean Elections Law that would provide Massachusetts candidates with public financing. The cartoonishly Machiavellian Finneran has been working obsessively to kill the law since its passage in 1998. Meehan, who had been considering a run for governor in 2002 but had hoped to put off a decision until later this year, had his hand forced by Finneran's dirty trick: He announced this week that, rather than run for statewide office, he will instead fight to preserve his district in the state legislature. Here's hoping that battle proves easier than banning soft money.

SUBTLE AS A SPHINX: "GREENSPAN SAYS END OF SLOWDOWN IN SIGHT"—*The Wall Street Journal*, July 19

"SLUMP PERSISTS, GREENSPAN SAYS"—*The Washington Post*, same day

HOME NEWS: Congratulations to our own Gregg Easterbrook, whose article "Abortion and Brain Waves" (TNR, January 31, 2000) has been chosen for inclusion in *The Best American Science and Nature Writing 2001* (Houghton Mifflin Company).

HOME NEWS II: It's summer, when a journalist's fancy lightly turns to ... finding something, anything, to write about. We at TNR would like to take advantage of these slow news weeks to re-inaugurate our Boring Headline Competition. The last time we undertook this tournament of tedium, in 1994, readers sent in such gems as "MANY IGNORE CANADA'S DAY OF INDEPENDENCE" (from the *Sun-Sentinel*), "TOURISM BUREAUS MAY CONSOLIDATE, BUT NOT RIGHT NOW" (*The Charleston Gazette*), and the winning entry, "LOCAL WOMAN, 82, CLEANS OUT DESK" (*The Huntsville Times*). Readers are encouraged to send their entries to Notebook Editor, THE NEW REPUBLIC, 1220 19th Street, NW, Suite 600, Washington, D.C. 20036, or e-mail them to tnr@aol.com. Entries must be received by Thursday, August 30. Winners will be recognized in Notebook. We are confident that you, our readers, will be more boring than ever before. ■



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Cloning's big test.

Ban Stand

By LEON R. KASS *and* DANIEL CALLAHAN

EVERYONE HAS BEEN arguing for weeks about whether President Bush should authorize funding for research on human embryonic stem cells. But few have noticed the much more momentous decision now before us: whether to permit the cloning of human beings. At issue in the first debate is the morality of using and destroying human embryos. At issue in the second is the morality of designing human children.

The day of human cloning is near. Reputable physicians have announced plans to produce a cloned child within the year. One biotech company (Advanced Cell Technology) just announced its intention to start producing embryonic human clones for research purposes. Recognizing the urgent need for action, Congress is considering legislation that would ban human cloning. Last Tuesday the House Judiciary Committee approved a tough anti-cloning bill, H.R. 2505, the Human Cloning Prohibition Act of 2001. Introduced by Republican Dave Weldon of Florida and Democrat Bart Stupak of Michigan, and co-sponsored by more than 120 members from both parties, the bill is scheduled for a vote on the House floor as early as this week. But the House is also considering a much weaker "compromise" bill that would ban reproductive cloning but permit cloning for research. It is terribly important that the former, and not the latter, passes. First, because cloning is unethical, both in itself and in what it surely leads to. Second, because the Weldon-Stupak bill offers our best—indeed, our only—hope of preventing it from happening.

The vast majority of Americans object to human cloning. And they object on multiple grounds: It constitutes unethical experimentation on the child-to-be, subjecting him or her to enormous risks of bodily and developmental abnormalities. It threatens individuality, deliberately saddling the clone with a genotype that has already lived and to whose previous life its life will always be compared. It confuses identity by denying the clone two biological parents and by making it both twin and offspring of its older copy. Cloning also represents a giant step toward turning procreation into manufacture; it is the harbinger of much grizzlier eugenic manipulations to come. Permitting human cloning means condoning a despotic principle: that we are entitled to design the genetic makeup of our children (see "Preventing a Brave New World," by Leon R. Kass, TNR, May 21).

So how do we stop it? The biotech industry proposes banning only so-called reproductive cloning by prohibiting the transfer of a cloned embryo to a woman to initiate a pregnancy. But this approach will fail. The only way to effectively ban reproductive cloning is to stop the process from the beginning, at the stage where the human somatic cell nucleus is introduced into the egg to produce the embryo clone. That is, to effectively ban any cloning, we need to ban *all* human cloning.

Here is why: Once cloned embryos exist, it will be virtually impossible to control what is done with them. Created in commercial laboratories, hidden from public view, stockpiles of cloned human embryos could be produced, bought, and sold without anyone knowing it. As we have seen with in vitro embryos created to treat infertility, embryos produced for one reason can be used for another: Today, "spare embryos" created to begin a pregnancy are used—by someone else—in research; and tomorrow, clones created for research will be used—by someone else—to begin a pregnancy. Efforts at clonal baby-making (like all assisted reproduction) would take place within the privacy of a doctor-patient relationship, making outside scrutiny extremely difficult.

Worst of all, a ban only on reproductive cloning will be unenforceable. Should the illegal practice be detected, governmental attempts to enforce the ban would run into a swarm of practical and legal challenges. Should an "illicit clonal pregnancy" be discovered, no government agency is going to compel a woman to abort the clone, and there would be understandable outrage were she fined or jailed before or after she gave birth. For all these reasons, the only practically effective and legally sound approach is to block human cloning at the start—at producing the embryonic clone.

THE WELDON-STUPAK BILL does exactly that. It precisely and narrowly describes the specific deed that it outlaws (human somatic cell nuclear transfer to an egg). It requires no difficult determinations of the perpetrator's intent or knowledge. It introduces substantial criminal and monetary penalties, which will deter renegade doctors or scientists as well as clients who would bear cloned children. Carefully drafted and limited in scope, the bill makes very clear that there is to be no interference with the scientifically and medically useful practices of animal cloning or the equally valuable cloning of human DNA fragments, the duplication of somatic cells, or stem cells in tissue culture. And the bill steers clear of the current stem-cell debate, limiting neither research with embryonic stem cells derived from *non-cloned* embryos nor even the creation of research embryos by ordinary in vitro fertilization. If enacted, the law would bring the United States into line with many other nations.

Unfortunately, the House is also considering the biotech industry's favored alternative: H.R. 2608, introduced by Republican Jim Greenwood of Pennsylvania and Democrat Peter Deutsch of Florida. It explicitly permits the creation of cloned embryos for research while attempting to ban only reproductive cloning. But that's not something it is likely to achieve. It licenses companies to manufacture embryo clones, as long as they say they won't use them to initiate a pregnancy or ship them knowing that they will be so used.

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Testing Is about Openness and Openness Works

Caroline M. Hoxby is a Professor of economics, Harvard University; Distinguished visiting Fellow, Hoover Institution; and member, Hoover's Short Task Force on K–12 Education.

In the past decade, forty-nine of the fifty states have adopted some form of statewide testing, which they are beginning to report in user-friendly "school report cards." Most of the report card programs have no stakes or low stakes, so what purpose do they serve? They create openness and information. They light up schools for the people who are supposed to make informed decisions about schools but who are too often kept in the dark: parents and legislators. The information is imperfect, certainly, but parents and policymakers armed with information can at least start a discussion about school improvement.

How much can one expect from a policy that just *informs,* with few stakes? I initially thought that one could expect only negligible results. It turns out that I was wrong. The states that started their testing programs at the beginning of the last decade did not break achievement records, but they did improve achievement at a significantly faster rate than states that only began testing in the past couple of years.

One can show this with simple calculations based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—the only nationally uniform test that is administered to large representative samples of students in each state. State NAEP testing, which began in 1990, is *designed* to help states track their achievement over time. No one "teaches to" the NAEP test because only a sample of students take it and no individual school's NAEP scores get reported.

I recorded the first year in which each state began its report card program. (I did not count a state if it conducted tests but kept parents in the dark about school and district results.) States with early school report card programs include Texas, Washington, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Connecticut, and Wisconsin. States that got on the report card bandwagon only lately include Iowa, Nebraska, Utah, Virginia, and South Carolina.

I looked to see whether states experienced growth in NAEP scores after they began report card systems (compared to states that had not yet begun such systems). I found that nine-year-olds' reading scores improved 0.26 points faster each year after testing began. Thirteen-year-olds' math scores improved 0.28 points faster each year after testing began. (Full results are available at www.economics.harvard.edu.) These gains are not tremendous, but they are statistically significant and do add up over a decade. **At the end of ten years, the nine-year-olds' reading scores would be 2.6 points higher and the thirteen-year-olds' math scores would be 2.8 points higher.**

Statewide standardized tests and school report cards may be unpleasant for ineffectual educators, but they should not be controversial with parents or policymakers who want to see higher achievement. Schools conduct themselves better when their constituents are informed.

— *Caroline M. Hoxby*

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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It therefore guarantees that there will be clonal embryo-farming and trafficking in clones, with many opportunities for reproductive efforts unintended by their original makers. And the bill's proposed ban on initiating pregnancy is, as already argued, virtually impossible to enforce.

There are further difficulties. The acts the Greenwood-Deutsch bill bans turn largely on intent and knowledge—hard matters to discern and verify. The confidentiality of the called-for Food and Drug Administration registration of embryo-cloning means that the public will remain in the dark about who is producing the embryo clones, where they are being bought and sold, and who is doing what with them. A provision preempting state law would make it impossible for any state to enact any other—and more restrictive—legislation. A sunset clause dissolving the prohibition after ten years would leave us with no ban at all, not even on reproductive cloning. Most radically, the bill would create two highly disturbing innovations in federal law: It would license for the first time the creation of living human embryos solely for research purposes, and it would make it a felony *not* to ultimately exploit and destroy them. The Greenwood-Deutsch legislation reads less like the Cloning Prohibition Act of 2001 and more like the "Human Embryo Cloning Registration and Industry Protection Act of 2001."

IT IS POSSIBLE that embryo-cloning will someday yield tissues derivable for each person from his own embryonic twin clone, tissues useful for the treatment of degenerative disease. But the misleading term "therapeutic cloning" obscures the fact that the research clone will be "treated" only to exploitation and destruction and that any future "therapies" are, at this point, purely hypothetical. Besides, we have promising alternatives—not only in adult stem cells but also in non-cloned embryonic stem-cell lines—that do not open the door to human clonal reproduction. Happily, these alternatives will not require commodifying women's ovaries in order to provide the vast number of eggs that would be needed to give each of us our own twin embryo when we need regenerative tissue. Should these alternatives fail, or should animal-cloning experiments someday demonstrate the unique therapeutic potential of stem cells derived from embryo clones, Congress could later revisit and lift the ban.

The Weldon-Stupak bill has drawn wide support across the political spectrum; feminist health writer Judy Norsigian and liberal embryologist Stuart Newman joined Catholic spokesman Richard Doerflinger and political theorist Francis Fukuyama in testifying in its favor. Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, a proponent of research with embryonic stem cells, has endorsed it. Thoughtful people understand that human cloning is not about pro-life versus pro-choice. Neither is it a matter of right versus left. It is only and emphatically about baby design and manufacture, the opening skirmish of a long battle against eugenics and the post-human future. Once embryonic clones are produced in laboratories, the eugenic revolution will have begun. Our best chance to stop it may be on the House floor next week. ■

Whitening black districts.

Color Line

By JASON ZENGERLE

GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

FOR DEMOCRATS, THE ROAD to retaking the House of Representatives may well begin here, at North Carolina A&T State University. Founded in 1891 as North Carolina's "A.[griculture] and M.[echanics] College for the Colored Race," the school has, over the years, played a prominent role in African American history: It was four A&T students who, in 1960, initiated the Greensboro lunch-counter sit-ins that eventually spread across the South. Astronaut Ron McNair, the second African American in space (who later died in the *Challenger* explosion), graduated from A&T; so did Jesse Jackson.

Now, as the North Carolina General Assembly draws up proposed maps for this year's congressional redistricting, some state Democrats believe the best way for their party to gain House seats is to move the predominantly black and strongly Democratic Greensboro—and therefore A&T—out of the predominantly black and strongly Democratic Twelfth District and into the neighboring Sixth, which is currently represented by Republican Howard Coble. "If you include Greensboro in the Sixth District . . . you turn that into a competitive district," explains one North Carolina Democrat. "And when [the seventy-year-old] Coble retires, that district becomes Democratic-leaning." The map that does this, which is circulating privately among politicos in Raleigh and Washington, D.C., would also create a new Raleigh-based Thirteenth District—North Carolina gains a congressional seat this year—that is drawn to heavily favor Democrats, who control the redistricting process. The end result? Instead of the current congressional delegation of seven Republicans and five Democrats, North Carolina could send seven Democrats and only six Republicans to Washington after the midterm elections next year—a crucial two-seat gain in a House where Republicans hold a mere twelve-seat majority.

There's just one problem: Twelfth District Representative Mel Watt, who in 1992 was one of two African Americans elected to Congress from North Carolina for the first time since Reconstruction. Watt, a 55-year-old former Charlotte lawyer, doesn't want to lose A&T. As he puts it, "They like being in my district, and I like representing them." What he won't say publicly—but what knowledgeable state Democrats say has been a major topic in private—is that Watt and his allies want to maintain his district's current racial makeup, which, at 45 percent African American, contributed to his winning nearly two-thirds of the vote last year. "The force of inertia is as powerful in politics as it is in physics," says one state Democrat. "[Watt] has relationships with black legislators, black community leaders, and black institutions, like North Carolina A&T, that he wants to

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keep." And unless Watt changes his mind, the Democrats' dream of picking up two seats in the Tar Heel State may remain just that.

In the last round of redistricting, ten years ago, Southern Republicans allied with black Democrats to create majority-minority districts in several states. The result was twofold: First, several Southern states elected black representatives for the first time in generations. Second, by concentrating black voters in a few areas and diluting their presence everywhere else, the GOP made dramatic congressional gains: By 1995 Republicans had picked up 27 seats in the South, gaining a majority in the region for the first time since Reconstruction. As a result, this time around Democratic redistricting efforts are focusing on "unpacking" some of the majority-minority districts created in 1990—that is, taking just enough minority voters out of these districts to make neighboring Republican ones competitive, while still keeping the "black" districts safe for their incumbents and for future minority candidates. Democrats think such unpacking could help them gain or retain seats in Georgia, Mississippi, and maybe Alabama. But, as the effort to unpack North Carolina's Twelfth District shows, it's no easy task.

Indeed, the Twelfth could be the poster child for the ten-year debate over majority-minority districts. In 1991 the Democratic majority in the North Carolina General Assembly—which boasted a number of black Democrats in leadership positions, including speaker of the House—passed a congressional map that included one majority-minority district. But North Carolina Republicans and some civil rights groups, citing the Voting Rights Act, complained to George H.W. Bush's Justice Department that North Carolina had enough African Americans to warrant two majority-minority districts. And the Justice Department agreed, ordering the General Assembly to draw up a new map with two majority-black districts.

The result was a new map featuring two excruciatingly contorted majority-black districts. The First District, in the rural eastern part of the state, achieved its 53 percent black majority by meandering through 28 counties, picking up pockets of black voters here and there; it resembled, in the words of one North Carolina politico, a "bug splatter" on a windshield. The Twelfth District, meanwhile, achieved its 53 percent black majority by snaking for 160 miles through the Piedmont region between Durham and Gastonia, passing through urban pockets in Greensboro, Winston-Salem, and Charlotte along the way. Sometimes the Twelfth was no wider than Interstate 85, a fact that in 1992 prompted one congressional candidate to remark, "I love the district because I can drive down I-85 with both car doors open and hit every person in the district."

But, aesthetics aside, the districts did what they were created to do: They sent two black Democrats, Eva Clayton and Mel Watt, to Congress in 1992. (They also helped turn a congressional delegation that had seven Democrats and four Republicans at the beginning of the 1990s into one with seven Republicans and five Democrats by decade's end.) Their bizarre shapes and explicit racial criteria, however, triggered a host of legal challenges, and in 1996 the Supreme Court found the Twelfth District unconstitutional. In 1997 the General Assembly drew a new, more compact Twelfth—with a 47 percent African American population—but it was subsequently invalidated by a federal district court. The General Assembly then drew yet another, even more compact Twelfth District, used for the 1998 elections, that was only 36 percent African American.

Nevertheless, Watt continued to win, beating his white Republican opponent by 14 points in 1998. Last year, running for the first time under the 1997 boundaries—which had been temporarily reinstated—Watt won 65 percent of the vote. In April, just in time for the current round of redistricting, the Supreme Court upheld this version of the Twelfth District as constitutional.

According to Watt, it is this tangled legal history, rather than race, that accounts for his desire to keep Greensboro in the Twelfth. "I'd like a map that maintains as much of the district's current configuration as possible," he says. "We spent ten years litigating about the shape of the district, and now, having gotten a favorable opinion from the Supreme Court, I'd think the state legislature would be reluctant to make anything other than modest changes." (In fact, given a recent federal court ruling on a New Jersey state legislative redistricting plan that unpacked several majority-minority districts, the North Carolina proposal would almost certainly withstand judicial scrutiny.) As for Watt's desire to keep A&T in his district, he insists he feels the same way about representing the predominantly white Davidson University outside Charlotte: "All the institutions in my district are particularly important." Watt contends that the 50,000-voter reduction his district requires should be accomplished by merely "tidying up around the ... outer edges." He adds, "My central point is ... this should be a minimal-change district."

And what Watt wants he'll likely get. Although congressional incumbents technically have no control over how their districts are drawn, in reality Watt has enormous leverage. Democrats, who control the General Assembly and the governor's office in North Carolina, are in charge of the redistricting process, but their majority in the state House of Representatives is a mere four seats. And a significant portion of the black caucus in the state House is alienated from the Democratic leadership—and therefore can't be counted on in a party-line vote, particularly on an issue as racially charged as the Twelfth District.

The irony is that, even if the map moving Greensboro out of Watt's district were approved, the district would still have a larger percentage of black voters—42 percent—than it did when Watt won easily in 1998. And with black voters making up about 63 percent of the Democratic primary electorate, such a district would be hospitable to future black candidates as well. Nonetheless, some black North Carolina Democrats are not only resistant to reducing the percentage of black voters in Watt's district, but, according to one Republican legislator, they have even discussed with Republicans creating an *additional* majority-minority district in the state. Concedes one North Carolina Democrat, "It will be very difficult politically to push a Twelfth District that Mel opposes."

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So Democrats, who hope to present an official congressional redistricting proposal in the next few weeks and pass it by Labor Day, are trying to win Watt over—albeit very gingerly. "No one wants to make Mel angry," says one North Carolina Democrat. "The dealings with him have been all carrot, no stick." Too bad the chance to regain power on Capitol Hill isn't carrot enough. ■

America's new ally: India.

Missile Defense's Children

By LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE Richard Armitage—a walking anvil who bench-presses more than 400 pounds, served three tours in Vietnam, and clomps around Washington like a bureaucratic pit bull—has been called many things. A marshmallow isn't one of them. But that didn't dissuade the prestigious *Times of India*, in a May article that could just as easily have been written for *Teen Beat*, from extolling Armitage as "a gentle giant who turns into marshmallow around children." The piece also gushes that "much of New Delhi has been in thrall of the Bush team's other great strategist Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz." And that's tame compared with the accolades coming from the Indian government, which in recent months has been praising the United States in terms unthinkable a decade ago. Moreover, the Bush administration has returned the compliment—racing, in the face of an increasingly hostile China, to put to rest a half-century of bitter relations with the world's largest democracy. Quietly, fitfully, but unmistakably, a new alliance is being born.

For U.S. policymakers used to napping through the anti-imperialist diatribes of their Indian counterparts, all this comes as a welcome surprise. Taking their cue from the pre-war British left, India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and his successors spent much of the cold war peddling Fabian socialism at home and neutrality abroad, which in practice meant strangling the Indian economy and routinely siding with America's foes. For decades, no epithet was too coarse for India's leading opinion makers to employ against the United States, and no amount of garish praise seemed adequate to describe the virtues of the Soviet Union. And with the exception of a brief period during the early '60s, when U.S. and Indian interests converged in the fight against Chinese aggression, the United States responded in kind—supplying vast quantities of arms to India's mortal foe, Pakistan.

So what changed? "India placed its chips on the Soviet Union, economic autarky, and military might," writes the Brookings Institution's Stephen P. Cohen in his insightful forthcoming book, *India: Emerging Power*. "It lost all three bets." Now, craving foreign investment and wary of an increasingly powerful China, a new generation of Indian policymakers is placing its bets on the United States. The most telling example came in May, when President Bush unveiled his missile defense initiative. While the rest of the world carped that the plan would provoke a new arms race, India took a mere six hours to declare its support. And Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh, who less than a year earlier had complained that missile defense "undermines ... global strategic stability," now boasts that New Delhi and Washington "are endeavoring to work out together a totally new security regime which is for the entire globe."

But if Indian officials seem eager to repair relations with Washington, Bush sounds like he's ready to move the ranch to Rajasthan. W.'s charm offensive began in April, while the rest of the world waited to see whether China would release the crew of the U.S. EP-3. Though barely noticed in the American press, Foreign Minister Singh was in Washington at the time and met with National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice at the White House. According to a senior White House official, the Bush team had agreed the president would "drop by" the discussion. But Bush didn't just drop by; he pulled a surprised Singh out of the meeting and took him for a stroll in the Rose Garden and then back to the Oval Office, where they talked about missile defense, China, and plans for improved ties. "He was beaming from ear to ear," says a Bush adviser who saw Singh emerge from the Oval Office. From there, Singh went to the State Department, where he continued the conversation with Colin Powell and Armitage. Finally, he was taken to the Pentagon, where Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld welcomed him with a full honor guard.

A steady stream of U.S. officials has been jetting between New Delhi and Washington ever since. In the last two months, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Henry Shelton has traveled to India twice to shore up defense ties; Armitage has visited to consult on missile defense; and Bush has dispatched Robert Blackwill, one of his senior foreign policy advisers on the campaign trail, to India as his ambassador. More important, the administration has said that it plans to lift sanctions against India (despite grumbling from the State Department's Nonproliferation Bureau), that it won't meddle in the Kashmir dispute, and that President Bush will visit New Delhi this winter. And the parade of Indian officials traveling to Washington hasn't abated either. When it comes to our relations with India, says Armitage, it took the Clinton administration "seven years to get to the point that Mr. Bush has gotten to in two months."

Actually, that overstates Clinton's achievement. "The first six years of the Clinton administration are years most Indians would like to forget," says Gopalaswami Parthasarathy, the recently retired Indian high commissioner to Pakistan. "United States policies were exclusively aimed at curbing our nuclear independence or meddling in our relations with our neighbors." Relations went from bad to worse in the wake of New Delhi's 1998 atomic tests, when Clinton slapped sanctions against India and, for good measure, admonished it to "define the greatness of India in twenty-first-century terms,

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not in something we've left behind." His administration even joined China in threatening to keep America's fellow democracy off the U.N. Security Council. During Clinton's final year in office, ties improved after the president visited India. But, even then, the Clintonites were mostly interested in chasing India's markets.

The Bush team brings to Washington a very different worldview, one closer to India's own. Gone is the Clintonite passion for arms control and the empty speechifying about a strategic partnership with Beijing. Gone too is the contempt for geopolitics that distinguished Clinton's approach to the international scene. In fact, geopolitics is precisely what the rapprochement with India is about. "The United States now sees India as an alternative to China," explains Cohen. "And Indian hostility toward China has become an asset." The Bush team insists that the thaw in relations with India isn't about "containing" Beijing. But White House and Pentagon officials concede that it is part of a strategy of "hedging" against the possibility. (Japan has a role to play as well.) "As China's power grows," explains a Bush adviser, "a strong India will provide stability and balance."

China figures in the calculations of Indian policymakers, too. Prevailing wisdom in the United States assumes that Pakistan poses the greatest threat to India. But that's not the way Indian policymakers see it. In their telling, the greater peril lies with the fledgling superpower and longtime adversary to their north; in fact, that's how then-Defense Minister George Fernandes justified India's atomic tests in 1998. Today, China and India share a disputed border across which they fought a war in 1962; the two countries are engaged in an escalating rivalry for influence in Southeast Asia; China continues to provide Pakistan with weapons and lobbies to keep India off the U.N. Security Council; and Beijing and New Delhi routinely trade accusations about Chinese repression in Tibet and about the haven India provides the Dalai Lama. Not surprisingly, then, as U.S. policymakers fret more and more about Beijing, their Indian counterparts have rushed to offer support. "NATO, the United States, and India will be on one side," Indian strategist Brahma Chellaney predicts. "China and rogue states, including Pakistan, Burma, and North Korea on the other side."

AND WHAT OF India's longtime adversary and our cold war ally, Pakistan? It's not an ally anymore. "There's less and less of a reason for a friendly relationship with Pakistan," says Richard Perle, a Bush campaign adviser and chairman of the administration's Defense Policy Board. On his recent visit to India, Armitage lumped Pakistan in with other "rogue states," declared that our past friendship with the country was a "false relationship," and worried about its nuclear program while expressing no similar concern about India's. And administration officials say they intend to keep in place sanctions against Pakistan, even as they lift those on India. This would never have happened during the cold war, when Washington blithely overlooked Islamabad's procession of military regimes. But today it's less forgiving, particularly since Pakistan's current military dictatorship provides aid and comfort to a host of terrorist organizations and to Afghanistan's ruling Taliban, which shelters Osama bin Laden. It has also aligned itself ever more closely with China and against the United States. Thus, even as Armitage was visiting New Delhi, Chinese Premier Zhu Rongi traveled to Pakistan, where President Musharraf pleaded for China's "active role" in maintaining the region's "strategic balance," signed a stack of agreements with Beijing, and inveighed against America's missile defense plan.

But the rapprochement between Washington and New Delhi isn't only about global politics; it's also about domestic politics. American companies like Microsoft and Cisco continue to boost levels of U.S. investment in India. The Bush team also recognizes the growing clout of Indian-Americans. And groups like the Congressional Caucus on India, which boasts 120 senators and representatives, haven't been shy about weighing in on South Asia policy. Meanwhile, on the Indian side, the spectacular achievements of the growing Indian-American community have made the United States the destination of choice for young elites looking to move abroad. And if America the place appeals to India's younger generation, so does America the idea. In fact, New Delhi's new policymakers have little use for either the socialism or the anti-Americanism of their predecessors.

There are, to be sure, exceptions, including many members of India's political opposition and its intellectual class. One of these, *New York Review of Books* contributor Pankaj Mishra, rails that India's embrace of America "is poodlism, pure and unashamed" and condemns its "craven desire to suck up to the Americans." But they don't read *The New York Review* in New Delhi. And, leftist critiques notwithstanding, the most compelling argument for closer ties between India and America is neither political nor economic. It is moral. India, like Taiwan and Israel, is a thriving democracy surrounded by hostile dictatorships—a multiethnic, multireligious federation that has much in common with our own. And, having finally recognized this kinship, India's current government views the United States as less an imperialist bully than a fellow democracy and, yes, a strategic partner. Which is exactly what it's becoming. ■

The idiocy of the Dems' rural strategy.

It Takes a Village

By FRANKLIN FOER

GERRY KAVANAUGH IS not exactly an obvious choice to guide the Democratic National Committee's newly launched "Rural Initiative." Born in Massachusetts, he attended college and graduate school in Pennsylvania. Before joining the DNC, he served as chief of staff to Senator Ted Kennedy—the living embodiment of coastal liberalism. Before that, he worked in Boston as an urban planner.

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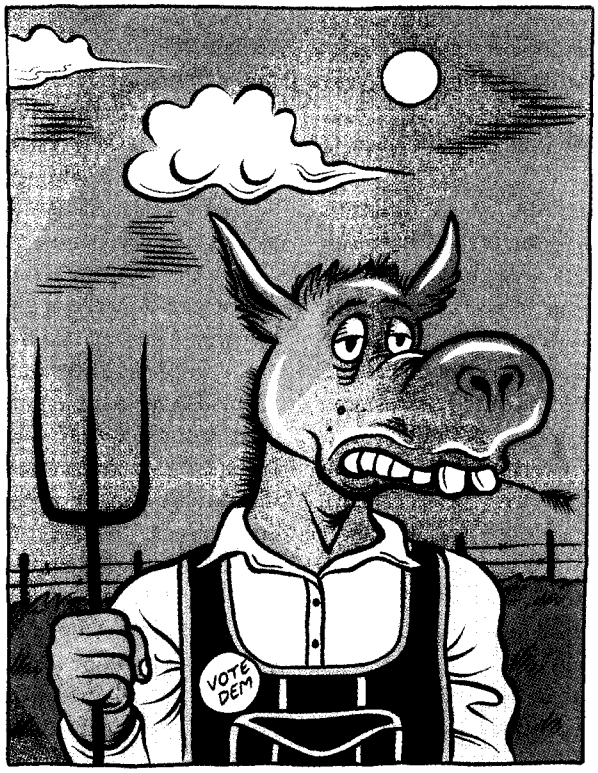
But don't let Kavanaugh's cosmopolitanism fool you. The Rural Initiative isn't some halfhearted gimmick, the kind party chairmen always devise after they've lost the White House. It's closer to an obsession. After decades of watching rural America drift toward the Republicans—culminating in last fall's famous blue-red split—Democrats have grown fixated on the voters in the countryside. The Democratic Governor's Association called its spring meeting "The Democratic Promise for Rural America." House Democratic leader Dick Gephardt has cobbled together the Challenge of Rural America Team, a working group of consultants and Blue Dog representatives. And DNC Chairman Terry McAuliffe has budgeted "a healthy sum" for polling and focus groups that will plumb the hearts and minds of rural voters. When the data come back, McAuliffe told *U.S. News & World Report* in June, the party will dispatch organizers to nearly a dozen states, where they will spend the next three years putting into practice what the DNC has learned.



The logic driving all this activity is straightforward: By any measure, Republicans cream Democrats in the countryside. Last year Al Gore won a measly 37 percent of the rural vote; raising that number, the theory goes, is the key to future Democratic success. But the fact that an argument is straightforward doesn't mean it's right. The truth of the matter is that the Democrats' diminishing appeal in the culturally conservative countryside is the flip side of the party's increasing strength in the socially liberal suburbs. It was largely this strength that enabled Gore to win the popular vote despite spoiler Ralph Nader. And it's a strength that will only grow: While the population of rural America has been shrinking for 50 years, the suburbs continue to expand. There's every reason to believe this demographic formula presages an impending Democratic majority. Unless the DNC's pursuit of rural voters screws it up.

THE HAND-WRINGING BEGAN just as the Supreme Court awarded Florida's electoral votes to George W. Bush. During the first week of December, Gephardt brought House Democrats to his Capitol office in batches of 20. As they sat around his long wooden conference table, yards away from the House floor, venting about the party's failure to retake the majority, Gephardt offered an explanation. Pointing to charts, his pollster Mark Gersh argued that the Democrats hadn't lost on their core "issues" but on their presentation of those issues. Specifically, they had allowed the culture war (especially gun control) to distract from the party's core economic message (Social Security, tax cuts, and health care). The Gersh analysis went over well. And a new consensus emerged: To become competitive in the heartland, the leadership would steer clear of new gun-control legislation. (Gephardt no longer even talks about requiring child-safety trigger locks, once thought to be a Democratic home run.) As pollster Stan Greenberg, another advocate of rural outreach, puts it, "Guns make the party look like Eastern elitist, out-of-touch cosmopolitans. We need to get away from this symbolism."

You might expect such reasoning from Blue Dogs. But Gephardt and Greenberg hail from the party's *liberal* wing. In part, they are simply trying to tailor the party's message to the peculiarities of 2002, when the most competitive open House seats will be in red states: Indiana, South Dakota, and North Carolina. But they are also fighting a larger postelection recriminations battle against party centrists. The centrists—exemplified by the Democratic Leadership Council—blame Gore's defeat on his economic populism. At a January debriefing, the Progressive Policy Institute's Will Marshall griped, "Populism seemed to reduce Bill Clinton's achievement. It was too left for most voters." The Gersh-Gephardt thesis provides liberals with a retort, shifting blame from economics to culture. In fact, the thesis implies that Gore wasn't populist enough: "Rural low-income voters are anti-establishment," says Greenberg, "and we should be talking to them in that language." Other libs, such as Massachusetts Representative Barney Frank, have proposed that Democrats use hostility to free-trade agreements to tap into rural resentments.

But both sides of the recriminations war assume that the Democrats' existing formula isn't working. And there's reason to believe not only that it is working, but that it will work better and better over time. As Noam Scheiber noted in these pages (see "Gun Shy," January 29), it's nearly impossible to name a viable Democratic congressional candidate who lost last year because of gun control. If it wasn't for design errors in the Palm Beach ballot, Al Gore would be president. And lately Democrats have been performing well even in the South and the Midwest. Since 1993 the number of plains-state Democratic senators has increased from seven to nine. And Democrats have put together a nice run in the South, winning the governorships of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

How have Democrats managed this? By steadily increasing their share of the suburban vote. As recently as 1988,

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George H.W. Bush beat the stuffing out of Michael Dukakis in the burbs—58 percent to 43 percent. But, after years of studying soccer moms and minivans, the Democrats have reversed the advantage. According to pollster Ruy Teixeira, co-author with TNR's John B. Judis of the forthcoming *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, Gore beat W. in the suburbs 55 percent to 41 percent. And the suburban vote continues to grow, reaching 43 percent of the total electorate last year. The rural vote, by contrast, is dwindling—from 28 percent of the electorate in 1988 to just 23 percent last year.

Moreover, the key to Democratic success in the suburbs has been exactly those liberal social positions that the rural strategy would jettison. "In the '90s, the suburban movement was among the upscale, particularly women," says Teixeira. "The data suggested that it was the social issues that moved them to the Democrats." Although most national polling doesn't isolate the suburban vote, there's a near-perfect laboratory for testing Teixeira's thesis: New Jersey, where 79 percent of the population resides in suburbia. Once upon a time, New Jersey regularly voted for Republicans, even conservatives. The state went for Ronald Reagan twice and Poppy once. But, as Clinton proved that Democrats could be decent economic stewards—and the social issues agenda changed from crime and race to abortion and guns—Democrats began to dominate the state. According to a recent Quinnipiac University poll, 71 percent of New Jerseyans support gun control, and only 14 percent favor an abortion ban. Put another way, if those voters had voted just on economic issues, they would still lean Republican, just as they did in the '80s. But they didn't—and they don't. Last fall Gore won New Jersey by 15 points. And what's true in New Jersey is true in wealthy suburban enclaves everywhere. Of the 46 new congressional districts Democrats have won since 1994, 29 have incomes above the national average. When Greenberg asked college-educated white men and women making over $75,000 per year to explain their votes, protecting abortion rights was their number-one answer.

AND A SUBURBAN strategy doesn't just work on the coasts; it works in Southern and border states as well. "The days of the Southern Democrats winning with an urban black/rural white alliance are over," says one analyst. Now Dems compete statewide by turning out black voters and carrying the suburbs. In Missouri, the late Senator Mel Carnahan, running on a gun-control platform, won 78 percent of the vote in predominantly black St. Louis and 54 percent in the city's predominantly white suburbs. Georgia's Zell Miller sent his gubernatorial poll numbers skyrocketing by promising lavish HOPE scholarships to children in the Atlanta suburbs. (When he ran up against the Gingrichian revolt of 1994, Miller won reelection by removing income caps on the scholarships.) And North Carolina's John Edwards, who is both pro-choice and anti-gun, slid into the Senate by running up a 68,000-vote advantage in the state's metropolitan areas, including the booming suburbs around Charlotte, Raleigh, and Greensboro.

Edwards and Carnahan did poorly in rural areas. (Carnahan, for instance, lost most counties in rural northwest Missouri by upwards of 20 points.) But their rural losses are directly linked to their suburban successes. Which highlights a problem with the current vogue for rural outreach: It ignores the fact that politics is, to some extent, a zero-sum game. Consider the case of Virginia gubernatorial candidate Mark Warner. Until recently, Warner was a favorite—leading his opponent by seven points in a Mason-Dixon poll in March. Unlike past Democratic candidates from suburban northern Virginia, Warner has paid careful attention to the state's mountainous southwest corner. He has stumped with Cooter from "The Dukes of Hazzard," and he kicked off his campaign in the small county seat of Abingdon. One ad, titled "Down Home," shows him posing with the NASCAR truck he has sponsored and is accompanied by a tune that sounds as if it was composed by a Spotsylvania front-porch hootenanny. (Sample line: "He'll work for mountain people and economic health . . . / Warner, public education / Warner, what a reputation.")

BUT BY OVERSTEPPING his rural sell, Warner may have quickly gone from success story to cautionary tale. Asked during a debate last week about a proposed ordinance that would ban guns in recreation centers, Warner—who has courted the National Rifle Association—replied that Virginia has enough gun laws. Warner supporters in northern Virginia were furious. "The NRA is not an organization whose endorsement I would ever want, nor would I ever get," Democratic Representative James Moran told *The Washington Post*. Strafed by friendly fire, Warner has reversed himself. And, in response, Republicans have accused him of Clintonian pandering. The current governor, Jim Gilmore, has called Warner "a political hustler every bit as slick as 'Slick Willie.'" Far from defusing the gun issue, Warner has made it Topic A—and hurt his own credibility in the process. As one Democratic consultant who works in Virginia told me, "This is exactly what we didn't want to happen. It could halt the momentum he had built."

Warner's not alone. Recent Democratic history is scattered with candidates who have tried and failed to cement rural alliances. When Illinois's Glen Poshard, a congressman from the prairie land downstate, ran for governor in 1998, he touted his opposition to gun control, abortion, and same-sex marriage. But, in the end, Poshard proved "a dubious candidate in the Chicago area," according to the *Post*. In households with incomes over $75,000—overwhelmingly located in the suburbs—he captured a mere 33 percent, and he lost the race by four points to a weak Republican opponent. A similar scenario unfolded last year in the Pennsylvania Senate race. At the start, conservative Rick Santorum was considered one of the most vulnerable incumbents in the country, and his opponent, pro-life Democrat Ron Klink, seemed ideally suited to appeal to conservative small towns and blue-collar voters. There was only one problem: Liberals in the Philadelphia area couldn't stand his positions, making it all but impossible for him to raise money. In November, Santorum—who had raised eight times as much cash as Klink—won by 7 percent. Gerry Kavanaugh probably would have done better. ■

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The terrorists next door.

House Arrest

By MICHELLE COTTLE

MT. SINAI, LONG ISLAND

WATCHING YOUNG CHILDREN pedaling their bikes through the sparkling new subdivision of Island Estates, you'd never guess that four of these suburban dream homes were torched by arsonists in the predawn chill on December 30. Nor can you tell which cheery white house on Casey Lane had threatening graffiti sprayed across its exterior in red paint. "'Burn the Rich,' or something like that," recalls a neighbor (who, like everyone else in the area, requested anonymity). "Everybody was really very scared. My daughter is eight years old, and when we were driving by she actually saw the scrawl."

Right after the attacks, members of a radical environmental group claimed responsibility, warning in an anonymous Internet posting that the fires were part of an escalating war on suburban sprawl. "I didn't want to tell the kids," recalls a mother of four who says she and her husband had bought a house but had not yet moved into the neighborhood back then. "But then the phone started ringing ... and it was all over the news." The FBI was called in, and in February investigators arrested four of the alleged perpetrators, all of them area teens. Three have since pled guilty to arson conspiracy.

Welcome to the modern ecoterrorism movement. Ecoterrorism (or "economic sabotage," as its advocates prefer) once primarily targeted industries—timber, mining, nuclear power—seen as particularly egregious despoilers of the environment. But lately the movement has fixed on a new target: suburban sprawl. Now a range of targets from SUV dealerships to two-story brick colonials are at risk. Since January of last year, ecoterrorists have torched more than a dozen new homes across Arizona, Colorado, Indiana, and New York.

The irony is that, for the most part, the arsonists (those who've been apprehended, anyway) look an awful lot like the people whose houses they're putting to the match—upper-middle-class, pro-environment, and local. In Boulder last year, a young man charged with setting fire to a new townhouse development turned out to live across the street, a beneficiary of the same suburban sprawl he now sought to deny other kids. (Though all parties involved with the case agreed not to ask about motive, the arson was widely considered an act of ecoterrorism.) Similarly, a man recently arrested in Phoenix for torching homes around a nature preserve lived on the edge of that preserve himself. And the four teens charged with the Mt. Sinai fires were middle-class and hailed from the surrounding burgs. As Gregg Easterbrook explained in these pages (see "Suburban Myth," March 15, 1999), the strongest anti-sprawl sentiment often comes from those who, having reached the promised land of single-family detached homes with two-car garages, want to keep out new arrivals. What's changed is that this resentment of new development has assumed the moral mantle of the environmental movement. And it has turned violent.

As ideological crusades go, ecoterrorism is relatively new. Greenpeace captured public attention in the 1970s with its harassment of whaling ships. But the movement didn't really emerge in the United States until the early '80s, with the founding of Earth First!. The organization was the brainchild of Dave Foreman, a former bigwig in the Wilderness Society who felt that mainstream environmental groups had betrayed the cause by signing on to a 1979 decision by the U.S. Forest Service to protect only 15 million of 80 million acres of undeveloped public land from logging, mining, grazing, and other economic activities. Foreman and a handful of like-minded activists quit their jobs and started Earth First!, taking as their guru Edward Abbey, an ex-forest ranger and author of the 1975 novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. Abbey's tale of four quirky anarchist Luddites who roam the countryside committing sabotage in the name of Mother Earth as they plot to blow up the Glen Canyon dam was entirely fictional. But it fast became the bible of radical greens. As a nod to Abbey, Earth First! introduced itself to the public in the spring of 1981 by unfurling a sheet of black plastic down the center of the Glen Canyon dam to create the appearance of a giant crack. A couple of years later, the group stepped up its "monkeywrenching" with the introduction of tree spiking, a process whereby anti-logging activists hammer long metal spikes into trees marked for lumber. The spikes don't harm the trees but can shatter a saw blade, making it difficult and expensive—and dangerous—for lumber companies to harvest in spiked areas. In 1985 Foreman published *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching*. An in-depth how-to for economic saboteurs, *Ecodefense* (now in its third edition) includes sections on spiking roads, burning machinery, building smoke bombs, trashing billboards, cutting fences, plugging waste-discharge pipes, trashing condos, sabotaging computers, and, of course, avoiding arrest.

By 1992, many in Earth First! were pushing for the group to renounce criminal acts. But just as Foreman et al. had abandoned the mainstream to work outside the law, an Earth First! group in Brighton, England, formed a pro-sabotage spin-off called the Earth Liberation Front. Patterned after the slightly older Animal Liberation Front, the ELF isn't technically an organization at all but more of a philosophy and a set of operating principles. Decentralized and nonhierarchical, ELF members function in small, independent cells—like the Irish Republican Army, explains ELF spokesman Craig Rosebraugh. According to Rosebraugh, anyone can be part of the group if he or she shares the ELF's beliefs and operates according to three broad guidelines: "Work to cause maximum economic damage to entities profiting from the destruction of the natural environment"; "Educate and reveal to the public the atrocities being committed"; and "Take all necessary precautions against harming life." ELF members communicate and recruit via the Internet: Anonymous dispatches claiming responsibility for acts of sabotage are sent to Rosebraugh via an e-mail router that disguises their origins, and Rosebraugh—who skirts legal trouble by

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claiming he is not actually a member of the ELF, merely a sympathizer—then posts the messages on the official ELF website and notifies the media. This decentralized structure makes it exceedingly difficult for law enforcement to track down ELF perpetrators. Oregon police now claim to know the identity of three ELF leaders. But, although the "group" has taken credit for dozens of major and minor crimes since it began operating in the United States in 1996, only five related arrests have as of yet been made.

This is a big problem, because, despite its cute acronym, the ELF has pioneered a form of ecoterrorism dramatically more dangerous than mere monkeywrenching. Though members still pursue traditional acts of ecosabotage—smashing windows, jamming locks, slashing tires—arson has become their weapon of choice: The ELF website now features a meticulously detailed manual on how to make and plant incendiary devices. And along with this expansion of destructive means has come an expansion of targets—university labs, genetically modified crops, horse corrals, political headquarters, banks, and, increasingly, private homes. The ELF's most infamous (and costly) attack was the October 1998 fire at the Vail ski resort, which caused some $12 million in damage. All told, the group boasts it has cost enemies of the environment some $37 million. The FBI considers it among the nation's leading domestic terrorist threats.

The public's assessment has thus far been more charitable. Rosebraugh is invited to speak at universities and conferences around the country. During the rash of fires in Phoenix, the *Phoenix New Times* ran a story about how many local residents, though they disapproved of the arsonists' tactics, empathized with the underlying impulse. In May NPR aired a commentary by an Arizona writer who said she was rooting for the arsonists: Having seen the once-pristine meadow around her cabin ruined by a tacky new megahome, this woman had "walked the land for months, debating arson" herself and now wanted to send the idealistic firebugs "money for matches."

None of which should come as a great surprise. Americans have always displayed a fair amount of hypocrisy in our environmentalism. We want our water, land, and air to be protected; we just want *other* people to make the required sacrifices. So, too, with our quiet suburban cul-de-sacs and vacation homes in the Rockies: Once we have ours, we want to make sure no one builds theirs next door. And if they do, well, send "money for matches." Which brings to mind the old joke: What's the difference between a developer and an environmentalist? A developer is someone looking to build a house in the woods; an environmentalist is someone who already lives there.

Rosebraugh denies that this is the sentiment motivating the ELF's attacks: "The issue here is not that families are building more dwellings to have a roof over their heads and be able to live healthy lives." Rather, it is a matter of excess. "All of the targets have been large, luxurious, wealthy homes, ranging from $500,000 to upwards of $1.5 million," he says. In fact, much of the ELF's anti-sprawl message sounds like a virulent strain of class warfare masquerading as environmentalism. Various post-arson communiqués from the group have railed against "future dens of the wealthy elite," "the white male industrial and corporate elite," and "building homes for the wealthy" while a third of the Earth's people "are either starving or living in poverty." Says Rosebraugh: "[T]here is no reason in the world, no justification in the world, for having that sort of display of greed and pure power and wealth. Meanwhile, maybe just a mile away, people don't have proper access to health care and nourishment because they don't have any money."

There are at least two fundamental flaws in this rationale: First, burning down new luxury homes does exactly zero to help poor people, whether they are one mile away or 1,000. Second, Rosebraugh's claim isn't true: While the ELF may have started out targeting only extreme displays of "greed and pure power and wealth," it has been working its way down the economic ladder. The most expensive homes in Island Estates listed for around $500,000. Most sold in the $350,000 to $400,000 range—pricey, but typical for Suffolk County (and much of Long Island, for that matter). As one Long Island soccer mom frets, "Who knows where they'll draw the line?"

THE MORE YOU look into the ELF, the less its good (or even ambivalent) press seems remotely warranted. Rosebraugh and others reject the "terrorist" label. "That applies to what actually harms life," says Rosebraugh. "The ELF has never harmed an individual in its history." True, the group sets fires at night when buildings are vacant, and all the targeted homes have still been under construction and unoccupied. But the ELF's escalating violence is clearly intended to cause terror, making people and businesses too afraid to locate in certain areas. Moreover, as FBI agent James Margolin notes, it's simply a matter of time before some firefighter or hapless bystander falls victim to one of these blazes. Similarly, the ELF's contention that it is targeting developers rather than homeowners is flat-out foolish. Even if the developer (or the developer's insurer) takes the full financial hit, it's the family planning to move in (and others in the area) who ends up scared of every bump in the night.

Moreover, despite the destruction they cause, many anti-sprawl arsons aren't even taken seriously as political statements, because it's hard to know to what extent such actions are driven by ideology and to what extent ideology has provided a cover—sometimes after the fact—for essentially random crimes. Folks around Mt. Sinai were certainly frightened by the neighborhood fires. But they dismissed the perpetrators as "a bunch of punk kids" with "nothing better to do on a Friday night." Then there's the Phoenix arsonist, Mark Warren Sands, who apparently didn't start out as an ecoterrorist at all. In a secretly taped confession to a friend, Sands claimed he was driven by graphic nightmares to burn down the first home (located right behind his own). According to his confession, he torched the same house a second time out of spite, then burned another house to throw police off the trail. Suddenly, area residents were buzzing about the mysterious ecoterrorist, and the press identified him as an avatar of the movement; articles told of the many locals sympathetic to Sands's apparent political ideals. All the commotion evidently spurred Sands to set fire to five more houses before he was caught. None of them, needless to say, was his own. ■

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A tour of Israel under siege.

State of Despair

By YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI

IN AN UNMARKED underground shelter in the northern border town of Kiryat Shemonah, everything is ready. When the Katyusha rockets start falling again from southern Lebanon, just beyond the pine-covered hills, this maze of concrete rooms will become the emergency operations center for the hundreds of shelters that form a shadow town below the earth. The walls here are covered with lists—of the neighborhood coordinators in charge of the orderly transfer of the 22,000 residents, the psychologists, teachers, and social workers who will be dispatched to the underground shelters. There's even an emergency broadcasting studio, which will offer advice to mothers with claustrophobic children and regards from friends and family scattered in different shelters.

Yedidyah Freudenberger, a big, laconic man who heads the operations center, is especially pleased with its latest innovation: a computerized system that can simultaneously open every public shelter within 30 seconds. Under the old system, it took about three hours for volunteers to open the shelters, leaving residents exposed. "Now we're the only town in the world that can move in seconds from peace to war," he says. "We're the world's champion in life under siege."

A chart on the wall enumerates the damage. Since the first Katyushas fell on Kiryat Shemonah in 1968, 36 residents have been killed, 372 have been wounded, and 487 have suffered shell shock. Of the town's 7,100 apartments, an astonishing 6,854 have been hit. The last Katyusha fell last year, just before Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. Since then, Hezbollah has confined its attacks to the Israeli army base at the Sheba'a Farms. But Freudenberger is convinced that Kiryat Shemonah will soon come under attack again—and that Ariel Sharon, frustrated by his inability to end Palestinian violence, will hit back hard against the group's Syrian patrons, perhaps prompting the next regional war.

"As soon as one front calms down, the Arabs heat up another," he says. "The only way to make peace is for Israel to negotiate with the Arab League."

Is that realistic?

Freudenberger smiles at his own desperate hope. "We Israelis are like a man in a tunnel who gropes toward a distant light," he says. "He doesn't realize that it's actually the headlights of an oncoming train about to crush him."

It's been ten months of unrelenting low-level war, and, in one sense, we're coping better than expected. While the intifada of the late '80s divided Israel bitterly, this time we're united. Yasir Arafat has restored to us a confidence in our basic justness. Most Israelis agree on what has happened: Twice the world has tried to resolve the Palestinian problem—in 1947 and in 2000—and twice the Jewish national movement has said yes and the Palestinian national movement has said no.

But the unity conceals a creeping fear about Israel's survival. The fear is not quite about war—according to a recent poll, 76 percent of Israelis believe we will win a regional conflict. It is vaguer and deeper than that. Not since the time before the Six Day War, when Israel faced seemingly insurmountable security and economic crises, have Israelis questioned the long-term viability of the Jewish state. An old Jewish fatalism has seeped in. According to the poll, two-thirds of Israelis don't believe peace is possible. Nearly half have curtailed their lifestyles since the intifada began and report greater tension and depression. In conversations in recent weeks with Israelis across the country, especially in border areas, the phrase I heard most often was "We're losing the state."

In part, the new pessimism is connected to a new constriction. Tel Avivis are afraid to visit Jerusalem. Jerusalemites no longer travel to the Galilee through the Jordan Valley—it's the shorter route, but it has been targeted by snipers. Residents of central Israel have stopped vacationing in Metullah, on the Lebanon border; a woman in Metullah told me she worries about the safety of her daughter, who lives in the coastal town of Netanyah, which has been hit by car bombs. Even our cars are no longer safe: After terrorists placed bombs in two parked cars in the town of Yehud near Tel Aviv, police urged drivers to check every morning to see if their vehicles have been tampered with.

Rachel Dahan left her native Kiryat Shemonah 18 years ago and settled in her husband's town, Sderot, near the Gaza border. Dahan calls herself a "shelter child"—part of a generation of children who regarded shelters as an extension of home and, as a result, suffered disorders like bed-wetting and an inability to concentrate. Only in Sderot did she gradually stop having nightmares. But then, in April, mortars fired from Gaza fell in Sderot. Though no one was hurt, Dahan is sure Katyushas will follow. She sees the familiar symptoms of trauma beginning among her five children, who cling to her, afraid of any loud noise. "Where should I run to now? My husband was afraid to live in Kiryat Shemonah. But what's the difference anymore? The whole country has become Kiryat Shemonah."

For a while after the current violence began, we pretended there were two Israels. There was the safe Israel inhabited by those who supposedly care only about "drinking wine with cheese," as Uzi Landau, the right-wing minister of internal security, contemptuously put it. And there was the Israel

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under siege—settlements, border towns, Jerusalem. Then came the Tel Aviv bombing in June. The Friday-night attack on a discotheque on the Tel Aviv beach—the ultimate symbol of a normalized Israel that has transcended Jewish history—ended the illusion of immune space. People still go to restaurants and concerts, but the pretense of two Israels is over. From Kiryat Shemonah to Netanyah to Sderot you hear the same refrain: For the Palestinians, we are all settlers.

In the narrow, shabby streets in the Israeli-controlled section of Hebron, an army curfew has closed Arab shops, their shutters covered with settlers' ugly graffiti demanding ARABS OUT. Near the entrance to the settlers' neighborhood hangs a banner that mimics the maudlin manipulations of Palestinian demonstrators. It is imprinted with a blown-up photograph of a baby girl playing with a doll—Shalhevet Pass, the daughter of settlers who was killed by a sniper from Abu Sneinah, the Palestinian-controlled neighborhood on the hill above. RETURN THE ARMY TO ABU SNEINAH, the banner demands. I ask a teenage soldier whether it's safe to be walking around; just before I arrived, there had been a shoot-out between Israeli soldiers and a Palestinian militia not far from here. "It's not Tel Aviv," he says dryly, then adds, "but Tel Aviv isn't safe either." He shrugs, inviting me to take my chances.

SUDDENLY, THE OLD Israeli clichés have returned. The Arabs want to drive us into the sea. There is no one to talk to. The whole world is against us. We feel we've slipped back into a Jewish nightmare, misunderstood by even well-meaning outsiders and sputtering among ourselves about Arab Holocaust denial, BBC bias, American paternalism, and European malevolence.

We have finally acknowledged the terrible truth of Oslo: We are trapped. Yitzhak Rabin assured us that, if the Palestinians reneged on their commitments, Oslo could be reversed. But he forgot one detail: the price. To uproot the terrorist state in the making will turn us into international pariahs. Oslo has created the worst of all possible scenarios: It has empowered the Palestinians to threaten our safety and embitter our lives but left them weak enough to hide behind international immunity. We are hardly passive: The army now routinely enters Arafat's territory after terrorist attacks. Still, many Israelis consider this a stopgap measure and fear there is no way to control the pathological entity emerging around us. The result is a growing sense of impotence—that even the mightiest army in the Middle East cannot protect us in a politically complex world. Continued American pressure for restraint, some fear, could undermine Israeli will. "For me, the state has already collapsed," says Sderot's Dahan. "Every day that they kill us and we don't respond means that they're winning."

My neighbor, Yaakov Maoz, is a former high school dropout and teenage construction worker, the son of Kurdish immigrants who has just begun a doctorate in Jewish philosophy. As a teenager, he joined the Likud. But the first intifada convinced him that greater Israel was unattainable, and he became a Labor voter. Now, with this intifada, he despairs over Labor's goals of a negotiated peace as well. He says: "We have no options. If we kill Arafat, then what? Invade Gaza and return to the occupation? We've been in that scenario before, and we don't have the stomach for it. But we also can't make a deal with Arafat. He's rejected our bottom-line offer, and, even if by some miracle he'd accept it now, we'd be crazy to bring him into Jerusalem after everything we've seen these last nine months. We can't make war, we can't make peace. If Sharon can't figure out how to protect us, who can?"

From disillusionment with occupation and disillusionment with negotiations has emerged a desperate alternative: a complete divide, unilateral withdrawal from the territories. Voices across the political spectrum—most recently Ami Ayalon, the former head of the Shin Bet, who some see as the best hope for a left-wing revival—have endorsed separation. Unilateral withdrawal would grant the Palestinians sovereignty over most of the territories while ensuring continued Israeli rule over settlement blocs, the Jordan Valley, and a united Jerusalem. But withdrawal would reinforce the perception that Israel is on the run, tempting the Arab world to intensify the violence.

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Few Jews have penetrated Arab society as intimately as has Avraham, as I'll call him, an old veteran of Labor Israel. He lived among the Bedouin and was trusted as a mediator for blood feuds among the Palestinians. Jews and Arabs, he says, cannot live together; if Israel chose not to expel the Palestinians from the West Bank after the Six Day War, it has no choice but to now expel itself. And then we must make clear to the Arabs the price they'll pay if they attack us. To survive in the Middle East, he continues, you must speak Arabic, not Yiddish. The answer to a suicide bomber—and the way to deter the next bomber—is to destroy the homes of all his relatives. If we respect Arab culture on its own terms, and most of all if we respect ourselves, we'll survive. In 1948, he recalls, Israel lacked weapons and soldiers but won the war. We can win again, he insists. It's just a question of learning to speak Arabic.

IN THE EARLY years of the state, Israelis maintained a buoyant self-sufficiency. If the Middle East wouldn't accept us we would create our own thriving Jewish island. As David Ben Gurion once said, "It doesn't matter what the gentiles say, it matters what the Jews do." The Middle East refused to recognize our existence, and we reciprocated, imagining ourselves a Mediterranean enclave. But then Oslo tempted us with its promise of a rational Middle East, and we admitted that we live in the Arab world. We lowered our guard, celebrating our ordinariness and stripping ourselves of sustaining myths of heroism and self-sacrifice. The terror of this time is that we find ourselves stranded in one of the world's most irrational and intolerant regions—without the Zionist self-sufficiency that made us confident we could endure the Arab world's enmity, and without the faith in a new Middle East that made us confident we could overcome it.

The concrete apartment blocs and apple orchards of Kibbutz Manara are separated from Lebanon by an electrified fence. At night, silence and near-total darkness intensify the unease. In the early years, when Manara consisted of four tents and a tin shack, kibbutzniks would bring water by donkey ten kilometers up the cliff; during the 1948 war, no supplies reached them for six months. Manara became a symbol of Israeli endurance under siege.

These days, however, Manara's future is uncertain. Not only because, with the ideological collapse of the kibbutz movement, Manara has suffered mass defections, leaving barely 100 members. But also because even those who fought for its survival find themselves asking subversive questions.

Late one evening, Pinchas Rosenfeld, one of Manara's founders, drops by the modest apartment of his daughter, Ayalah Kfir, who helped lead the fight to build a neighborhood for outsiders that would finalize Manara's evolution to a non-communal village. Rosenfeld opposed the idea but now concedes its inevitability. "Kibbutz or no kibbutz, I want Manara to continue to exist," he says in the emphatic tone of a man unaccustomed to failure. "That is what gives my life meaning."

But Kfir is no longer sure the new neighborhood will save Manara. After Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, she'd hoped that an easing of tensions would make Manara—with its magnificent view of the hills of Lebanon on one side and of the snowcapped Mount Hermon on the other—attractive to outsiders. But, she asks, who will move to a war zone? "For the first time I'm questioning our ability to endure in hard times," she says quietly. "The real question isn't Manara's survival but Israel's."

"Can we persevere against a sea of Arabs?" wonders Rosenfeld, who has spent a lifetime defending this cliff.

"Maybe these questions always existed," says Kfir. "But Israeli society was more naïve."

"There was more equality," adds Rosenfeld. "People were ready to sacrifice together. Now we have one of the biggest gaps in the world between rich and poor. How did it happen to us, with our social solidarity? And what will keep us together when we have to fight again for survival?"

Rosenfeld goes off to guard duty. At age 76, he's still on call. "The generation of giants," Kfir says to me as he leaves. Her admiration contains an implicit question: Who will maintain this kibbutz and this country when the giants are no longer here to shame us into persistence?

EVERYWHERE THERE IS a sense of tenuousness, of the map unraveling. One op-ed writer recently suggested that Israel consider evacuating the Triangle—near the coastal plain and within the 1967 borders—to free itself of that area's large Arab population. In farming communities in the northern Negev desert, residents are still recovering from the shock of Ehud Barak's offer to exchange West Bank settlements for the Negev sand dunes of Halutzah. The unity government has just decided to build five new communities in Halutzah to forestall future withdrawal, a decision attacked by the left-wing Meretz Party. Meretz says the planned communities endanger any future peace agreement; but other Israelis are appalled that a Zionist party, for the first time in memory, would oppose building "settlements" within sovereign Israel.

Jews in the Galilee worry that Arab villages are forming an unbroken territorial bloc; in the Negev, they worry that the desert is being gradually expropriated by Bedouin squatters. Many fear that Arabs will eventually form a majority in both areas—which together contain Israel's remaining open spaces—and demand autonomy and ultimately union with Palestine, leaving Israel truncated and untenable. That fear has been bolstered by Arab Knesset member Azmi Bashara, who recently appeared at a Damascus memorial for Hafez al-Assad, sharing the platform with Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nassrallah and calling on the Arab world to unite against Israel.

Three young Ethiopian immigrants hang out in the late afternoon at a pinball arcade in downtown Netanyah, north of Tel Aviv. One is "just out of the army," another is "between jobs," and a third describes himself as "self-employed, repairs kind of thing, do I know?" But these young people—two of whom, as children, trekked across jungle and desert to reach Zion—still see themselves as a success story and the country as full of promise. Only the Arabs cause them despair.

"The Arab Israelis are the most dangerous of all," says Tuviah.

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"They come here from the villages in the Triangle and move among us freely," adds Uri. "They see everything that happens here; they know our every move. Who do you think tells the terrorists where to place the bombs?"

Tuviah reconsiders: "They were born here, and we don't treat them right. This is our country—still, you have to understand them."

"I understand them," agrees Uri. "But they want to throw us out of here. And we have nowhere to go."

About a half-hour drive down the coast from Netanyah is the mixed Arab-Jewish city of Jaffa. Until this year, the restaurants and cafés in the Arab neighborhoods were filled with Jews. But few Jews come now. Jaffa hasn't recovered from the Arab riots in solidarity with the intifada last October or from the Jewish riots that followed the bombing of the discotheque near the Jaffa-Tel Aviv border in June. As Jews stoned a mosque, Jaffa Arabs locked themselves in their homes; some still avoid Tel Aviv.

In the early evening, Arab men gather beneath the bamboo awning of Abed Tossina's tea shop to smoke nargillas and watch the sea. Tossina, a young man with broken teeth, has no qualms about identifying himself as an Israeli. "During the October riots, friends said to me, 'Why don't you throw stones with us at the police?' I said, 'God has given every person a job, and my job is to show the Jews that not all Arabs are monsters.'"

If the situation worsens, will Arabs in Jaffa be in danger?

"My head tells me no, my gut tells me yes. In Israel we say *y'iyeh tov*—everything will be OK. But the person who first said it—we're still waiting for him to explain to us exactly how and when it will be OK."

IT IS A season of self-imposed disasters. After the Versailles wedding-hall collapse in Jerusalem in May—which claimed more fatalities than any terrorist attack—we discovered that buildings all over the country have been shoddily built and are at risk of collapse. Then ammonia seeped into Tel Aviv's water supply, and residents were instructed not to drink even boiled tap water. The Sea of Galilee, Israel's main water supply, sinks lower and lower, and water may soon be rationed. A people that turned itself from a polyglot collection of refugees into a high-tech superpower no longer trusts its capacity for the miraculous. Increasingly, it questions even its most minimal competence.

"I feel like I'm part of a losing team," says Jon Saperstein, a former American living in Kibbutz Sasa near the Lebanon border. "No one plans ahead. We deal with the emergency of the day, and then it's over until the next time. No one realized we were running out of water? Did anyone in government think through the implications of settling the West Bank? And Oslo too: Where was Plan B in case it didn't work out? For eighteen years we sat in Lebanon, and in all that time no one thought of building a fence. Do you know what kind of fences they can make in this hostile world? Versailles didn't just happen. Everyone cuts corners. There are no principles, only interests." Saperstein's living room is only three kilometers from the border, but his anxieties are not about Hezbollah and Syria, they are about Israel.

Everyone has his or her own coping strategy. Vacations abroad—even to nearby destinations like Cyprus or Turkey—have become psychological necessities, infusions of normalcy. One woman on the northern border says she's cured herself of her addiction to news updates: "Now I only read the paper in the morning and listen to the news twice a day"—an Israeli version of detachment.

A defiant normalcy prevails in Sderot. "Sderock" is an air-raid shelter that the Sderot municipality has turned into a studio for aspiring rock musicians. The padded walls are covered with posters of '60s rock stars; a soldier wearing army pants, combat boots, and a Led Zeppelin T-shirt practices with his band. Sderot has produced several of Israel's leading rock bands, and dozens of local youths want to emulate that success.

The transformation of an air-raid shelter into a rock studio symbolizes the transition Israel tried to make in the 1990s—from siege to normalization. I ask Avi Vaknin, a musician with spiky hair and sharp sideburns who runs Sderock, if he fears his studio may soon be turned back into a shelter. "No way," he says. "The studio is too much a part of the identity of this place. I suppose in wartime anything is possible. But I don't think about those things. Life is complicated enough; I don't have time to worry about living next to Gaza. There will be mortars or there won't be mortars; life goes on."

Vaknin gives me a CD he's produced featuring Sderot's new bands. On the cover is a photograph of a plaque marking the convergence point of four American states: Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico. I ask him about that curious image, and he explains: "Can you imagine living in a country without an enemy next door? In Israel a person gets through the day and thinks, 'Things are going pretty well, I haven't been shot today.' But here are four states sharing the same border, and nothing happens. No shooting, no mortars, no hatred. Just a border."

RUCHAMAH NAKASH LIVES in Metullah, the northernmost town in Israel, at 30 Lebanon Street, Metullah's northernmost house. Nakash calls it "the first house in Israel"—to which her teenage son says sardonically, "It's the last house." Just beyond the border fence, clearly visible from the Nakashes' living room, trucks and jeeps drive by bearing the yellow flag of Hezbollah, a fist holding a gun. Nakash says that the key to a normal life on the border is maintaining a sense of control over your life. "I raised my children with the idea that they aren't helpless," says Nakash, who heads the municipality's education department and whose great-grandparents were founders of Metullah. "If a Katyusha is coming toward you, lay down and cover your head. If you hear that terrorists have crossed the border into Metullah, lock the windows and doors." Nakash believes that Israel will persevere. And she's learned not to think about the fact that she now lives on the border of the Iranian revolution. But she's given in to her husband's insistence that they buy curtains, which she draws at night to prevent Hezbollah from peering in. "I know it sounds silly," she says, laughing. "But it gives us a sense of control." ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Tipping the Scales

Cultural historians of the future will, I trust, pay particular attention to Orson Welles and Marlon Brando. The best work of those two gigantic talents will obviously need consideration, but there is a special aspect to these two men, a special cultural relevance in what they did with their bodies. Both of them allowed themselves to become enormously fat. Other actors who began as lissome lovers and ended up corpulent—Eugene Pallette and Walter Slezak are two—seemed to be naturally progressing in ordinary life; it was almost what we expected to happen to them. But Welles and Brando were firebrand young actors of immense ability and even more immense promise, who after some twelve or fifteen years of work as leading men seemed deliberately to abandon that concern and opt for monstrosity. Why?

With Welles, the matter has always seemed to me a case of aggravated juvenility. Enclosed in that latter-day Falstaff was a child who wanted everything his own way, and when he couldn't get it, which was in some measure his own fault, he sulked by eating, and got even by forcing the world to take him as a pig. That was Welles the actor. Welles the director (not an equivalent talent in Brando) is at least of equal historical interest: the betrayal of that gift was not accomplished merely by piggishness.

Brando is a different story, brought to the fore yet again by his appearance in **The Score** (Paramount). "Appearance" is here used literally. He is so huge that my first thought was posthumous: what are they going to do with that body when he dies? No man or team of men will be able to lift it. They will have to get a derrick into the hospital or his home. It's strange, too, what has happened to his face. His features, once so unconventionally handsome, dangerous yet beautiful, have become baby-like: he now looks like a giant beach ball with a silly doll's head pasted on top of it.

Here he plays, or plays at, a Montreal crime boss, sybaritic and cajoling. He persuades Robert De Niro, a burglar-cum-clubowner who wants to quit crime, to return for one last big heist. A comparison to the recent *Sexy Beast* is hardly worth making because both of these picture are so much like so many predecessors. What is awesome and awful, heartbreaking and disgusting, is what Brando has allowed Brando to become. He has bothered so little about his corpulence for the last few decades that by now he is exhibited almost as a freak. He is something like the degenerated professor in *The Blue Angel*, except that Brando doesn't feel disgraced—he seems to smirk about his mammoth size. (Would four hundred pounds be a near guess?)

Presumptuously no doubt, I felt a slight familial connection with Brando for a time. In 1943 a children's play of mine was directed by Maria Piscator at the New School in New York, and Brando, a student there, played a tiny silent part (which he did vividly). When the production moved to Broadway in 1944 for two weeks of Easter matinées, he went with it for his professional debut. I had hardly spoken ten words to him through all of this, but as he moved on, playing a gawky sixteen-year-old in *I Remember Mama* and emotionally demanding roles in *Truckline Café* and *Candida*, I felt an unwarranted pride. Later I even suggested to a casting agent I knew that he was the right actor for Stanley in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. (That agent, by the way, ignored my sagacity: another agent placed Brando in the role.)

When Brando went to films in 1950, I felt my (one-sided) familial bond dissolve, but I had a reminder of it around 1955. He founded his own film production company and made his father, Marlon Brando Sr., the head of it. I was then the editor-in-chief of a small publishing house in New York, and Brando senior—a tall man whose head was shaped much like his son's—came to see me. Among other books, my firm published a line of Westerns, as did many houses then. Brando senior said his son was looking for a Western. I suggested a couple of ours (eventually they chose another one—*One-Eyed Jacks*). As we were chatting, I told him about my slight connection with his scintillating son: Senior smiled, leaned back, and opened up about some of the escapades and scrapes his boy had gotten into along the way. I remember one line: "I let him go broke a couple of times," said the father, with a chuckle.

Neither he nor I nor anyone on earth could have foreseen Junior's eventual escapade—his bloat. From the beginning Brando the star was notoriously difficult. Many of the stories about him dealt admiringly with his fanatical quest for perfection in his work; yet even through those earlier days he also provided the press with a series of cracks about the emptiness of an actor's life. As far as can be inferred, what seems to have happened was that, in the course of time, his conviction of the emptiness of acting superseded his interest in perfection.

It is this supersession that cultural historians will, I hope, explore. Brando burst into the theater with a unique, irresistible, iconoclastic talent. When he was young, anything and everything lay ahead of him. He could have done any role, stage or screen, that he wanted to do. For a while he chose material carefully, but success seemed to strike him as disaster, as imprisonment. Why, with this gift that was often called genius, was he so revolted by his triumphs? What was there about the art and the profession of acting in the twentieth century that sickened him? Certainly some great actors of the past led peculiar lives, but very few of them were obsessed with a sense of futility in their work. Why did—and does—Brando think that? I take it to be a cultural question more than a psychological one, related to what happened to the profession of acting in the twentieth century, how it moved for so many from art to art-plus-exploitation to exploitation alone. And now we learn that live actors may no longer even be necessary in films, a development that must in a vindictive way amuse Brando, even please him.

In any case, the appearance of Brando in *The Score* is more than an oddity. It is a pronouncement.

The French playwright, screenwriter, and director Francis Veber is a master of an undervalued and serious art: farce. (Strange how the two words "French" and "farce" go together, like "Greek" and "tragedy.") He first became really visible in this country with *La Cage aux Folles*, which, though strained, showed he was a descendant of Feydeau. Then he made *The Dinner Game*, a perfect farce: it began with a slightly skewed premise and, with absolute logic, built on it to absurdity. Now Veber has written and directed **The Closet** (Miramax), whose premise is a

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mirror image of *La Cage aux Folles*. In the earlier film a gay man pretends to be straight; now a straight man pretends to be gay.

With a skill at construction that Frank Gehry might appreciate, Veber builds on his basic idea. An accountant in a huge firm, very straight, is slated to be fired. On the advice of a friend, an elderly gay man, the accountant saves himself by pretending to be gay. His friend has assured him, correctly, that these days no corporation wants to be accused of sexual-orientation prejudice. The developments from this premise are clever, the excellent Daniel Auteuil fully creates the accountant, and the scene designs by Hugues Tissander—especially the corporation's plant and offices—are dazzling.

A delight. ■

Martin Filler on Architecture

Mies and the Mastodon

NO SEASON IN living memory has offered the embarrassment of architectural riches on view in exhibitions across the United States this summer. With retrospectives on Frank Gehry at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Rudolph Schindler first at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art and now at the National Building Museum in Washington, and a Ludwig Mies van der Rohe double-header in New York, not even the most avid proponent of the art can complain that architecture is being slighted, as it had been by major American museums for much of the last decade.

Why, how, where, and when exhibitions on established artists occur can be traced to a variety of motivations, from so-called calendar shows that mark an anniversary of some sort to surveys that reflect the general perception that it is time for a fresh look at a particular body of work. In the case of **"Mies in Berlin"** at the **Museum of Modern Art** and **"Mies in America"** at the **Whitney Museum of American Art**, the reasons are more personal in nature. This exhibition project began as the brainchild of Phyllis Lambert, founding director of the Canadian Center for Architecture in Montreal, a study center and the world's foremost museum of the building art. An heiress to the Seagram liquor fortune, in 1954 she persuaded her father and the company's president, Samuel Bronfman, to let her select the architect for its new New York headquarters and to oversee its construction. The twenty-seven-year-old Lambert chose no less than Mies van der Rohe, universally acclaimed as one of the titans of modern architecture.

Mies's rigorously simplified structures, typified by grids of steel and glass and an absence of applied ornament, represented the Platonic ideal of modernism for many people. He was rivaled at the time only by the two other architects whom Lambert considered most seriously for the job: Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright (whose Guggenheim Museum was erected two miles uptown during the same years as the Seagram Building). But Corbusier and Wright were increasingly interested in expressive effects that Lambert found dated and superficial. As she later wrote, "Mies forces you in. You have to go deeper. You might think this austere strength, this ugly beauty, is terribly severe. It is, and yet all the more beauty in it."

The result of Lambert's precocious effort was one of the best tall structures of the twentieth century (though it is hardly the building of the millennium, as Herbert Muschamp hyperbolized in *The New York Times* two years ago, or, more preposterous yet, the building of two millennia, as he even more breathlessly maintained in his first review of the current Mies shows). Even within Mies's own oeuvre, an achievement more outstanding than the Seagram Building is surely his German Pavilion of 1928–1929 for the International Exposition in Barcelona. The masterwork was torn down after the World's Fair and reconstructed on its original site in 1986. With its seemingly free-floating wall planes and its open-plan spaces that go further than Wright's dematerialization of the box-like room, this was the most radical re-thinking of architectural enclosure until Frank Gehry's free-form experiments six decades later.

RECENTLY LAMBERT DECIDED to originate an exhibition on the work that Mies did in the United States after he emigrated here in 1938, no doubt to memorialize her own remarkable role in his career. (As well as his role in hers: after the Seagram commission, she worked for a while in Mies's Chicago office and went on to become an architect in her own right.) A recent consortial arrangement between the CCA and the Whitney dictated that the show appear at that New York venue. Lambert approached Terence Riley, the chief curator of architecture and design at the Museum of Modern Art, home of the Mies van der Rohe Archive (its holdings are crucial to any serious exhibition on the architect), and asked him to join in her retrospective.

Riley understandably declined Lambert's offer. Though she is extraordinarily generous with her fortune, she also possesses a well-known will of iron. Rather than joining forces with her, Riley sensibly decided to mount a separate survey of Mies's earlier career in his native Germany. The architect's working life divides quite neatly into two halves, thirty years in Germany, thirty-one in the United States (with the exception of a vacation house in the Rockies that he designed before leaving Berlin, and his New National Gallery in Berlin, completed a year before his death, in 1969). Thus the dual arrangement makes good sense, especially as it affords the enterprise an appropriate spaciousness that no single institution would likely give it.

Mies's reputation has risen steadily since his hundredth anniversary, which unfortunately coincided with the full flood of American postmodernism and its xenophobic attempts to stigmatize him (along with his fellow German and erstwhile Bauhaus director Walter Gropius) as the *fons et origo* of alien International Style globalism. Yet even the provocateur Robert Venturi, who turned Mies's most famous dictum on its head by impertinently declaring that "less is a bore," has said that he wished he could take back his jibe at a master whom he now reveres.

For all that Venturi and Denise Scott Brown profess to have learned from Mies, however, do not expect his brand of cool

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reductivism from them any time soon. And even though Mies's exacting minimalism has any number of present-day exponents—the British architects John Pawson and Graham Phillips, the much-sought-after Swiss team of Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, and their more talented countryman Peter Zumthor—none of them can be described as specifically Miesian. (That is especially true of Herzog and de Meuron, whose tendency toward haphazard detailing and materials that weather badly would make the *Meister* cringe.) Moreover, recent technological advances in everything from glass to adhesives enable today's minimalists to achieve effects much more stunningly simplified than anything Mies was able to accomplish. He wanted, he said, to create an architecture that was *beinahe nichts*, almost nothing; but present-day practitioners have extended the boundaries of nothingness in ways undreamed of a generation ago.

Still, Lambert's autoreferential celebration could well turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Taken as a whole, the two shows and their excellent publications set out the most convincing case ever likely to be made for Mies. And if his oeuvre does not seem to cry out for such a thorough reassessment just now, still the quality of research and analysis that this undertaking has prompted is admirable. An international team of scholars in a Getty-funded MoMA seminar led by Riley and Barry Bergdoll, the organizers of "Mies in Berlin," has greatly advanced the Mies literature with its findings. Lambert and her group of essayists have done so as well. She was evidently determined to have the last word on Mies, and her exhaustive tome, at almost six hundred pages, is half again larger than the big MoMA book, in the identical Miesian square format. Her uptown exhibition is likewise larger than its midtown counterpart, though it can be argued that Mies had more work in the second half of his career. Neither Lambert nor MoMA tends to do things by half measures, so the combined effort has "definitive" stamped all over it.

Yet there are notable disparities between the presentations at the two museums. The Whitney's "Mies in America" is by far the more successful installation. It was designed by the Spanish-born video artist Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, who employed an evocative array of Mies-inspired spatial divisions and circulation patterns, with backgrounds in a subtle spectrum of grays and off-whites. The mounting is so devastatingly chic that the minimalists among New York's fashionistas will be tempted to bring along their Frette futons and move right in. Still, this low-key approach is riskier than it seems: Mies's later drawings (with the exception of his marvelous large-scale photo-montages) have much less wall power than his high-contrast renderings of the 1920s. And despite the fact that Mies's late work is nowhere near as exciting as his post–World War I designs, the Whitney installation stresses its stately sublimity with such allure that the brash vitality of the young Mies can incorrectly seem somewhat gauche in contrast.

COURTESY WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Mies van der Rohe, Seagram Building, 1954–1958

Manglano-Ovalle also made new videos of four Mies buildings. Sometimes his work is a bit too good, such as his video of the New National Gallery of 1961–1968 in Berlin. Shown in a darkened, chapel-like space centered with a large, dramatically lit model of the building below the screen, that time-lapse study compresses the numinous light changes of a twelve-hour sequence into sixteen minutes. This hypnotic presentation can leave viewers who have never visited the actual structure with the misleading impression that this is a great building, when in truth it is one of Mies's worst.

Mies originally designed the scheme of the New National Gallery for the headquarters of the Bacardi rum company in Cuba, and he transformed it into a plan for a museum after Castro's takeover in 1959 put an abrupt end to the original commission. The structure comprises a square glass-walled pavilion set atop a story-high granite podium with one glass wall. The light-flooded, one-hundred-sixty-six-foot-square upper gallery for changing exhibitions is terrible for displaying art, and the subterranean spaces for the permanent collection are bad in a completely opposite way. This almost laughable transmogrification of function—from office building to museum—and of location—from tropical Caribbean to northern European—exposes, more than any other Mies design, the severe limitations of his unending search for what he called "universal space." He believed that his extremely generalized structures could accommodate any use, but in the end they became too vaguely connected to specific needs to make them effective for any single purpose.

That was the great trap of Mies's late career. Bedazzled by American notions of grand scale, he obsessively sought ways of enclosing bigger and bigger spaces with as few visible means of support as possible. Using huge roof trusses and space frames to cover over vast clear-span areas with no internal columns, Mies thought he was attaining some kind of architectural nirvana. Yet his single-minded quest left out all the humanity that was palpable even in his most pared-down designs of the 1920s. This is especially apparent in his unexecuted Chicago Convention Hall project of 1953–1954. That ten-story-high, half-million-square-foot structure, best known from the photomontage depicting a Republican National Convention in it (a choice of subject matter characteristically Miesian in its tropism toward the powers that be), would have reduced the fifty thousand people whom it could have held to ant-like insignificance.

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In addition to Manglano-Ovalle's videos, Lambert commissioned two series of new photographs of Mies's buildings, by Richard Pare and by Guido Guidi, both of whom have done similar assignments for other CCA shows. The men came up with some memorable images. Among them is Guidi's poignant shot of the now rather bedraggled Minerals and Metals Research Building of 1942–1943 at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, reminding us that Mies's architecture requires a high level of maintenance. Minimalism is pitiless in exposing flaws that traditional architectural styles cleverly concealed.

In this earliest of Mies's executed American commissions, he did not have a budget ample enough to indulge his love of rich materials deployed with exquisite simplicity, epitomized by the sleek but sumptuous Barcelona Pavilion. At IIT in Chicago, where Mies became head of the school of architecture, all the fanatical attention that he lavished on how the parts were put together cannot fully distract attention from the run-of-the-mill quality of the components. (His financial restraints were exacerbated by wartime restrictions on most building products.) Only when he joined forces with the munificent Bronfmans would he be able to work with bronze and travertine instead of steel and brick.

None of Pare's or Guidi's likenesses comes close to the stunning suite of chromogenic color photographs produced for the MoMA show by Thomas Ruff. It is titled "l.m.v.d.r.," for the initials of the architect. (He was born Maria Ludwig Michael Mies. In German *mies* means ugly—an inauspicious name for an aspiring architect; and at the age of thirty-five he appended his mother's maiden name Rohe and arrogated the Dutch noble "van der" to create a more imposing moniker for himself.) The series comprises pictures of Mies buildings that Ruff either took himself or digitally manipulated from appropriated photos. His propulsive, horizontally blurred portrait of the rebuilt Barcelona Pavilion was inspired, he has explained, by his notion of that building as a locomotive of modernism. This image is a brilliant distillation of Mies's masterpiece, and what Ruff's representation lacks in formal accuracy it more than makes up for in spiritual fidelity to the architect's dynamic vision.

In another compelling picture, Ruff started with an old photo of Mies's Afrikanische Strasse Municipal Housing of 1926–1927 in the Wedding section of Berlin, super-imposing the name of the development and a flotilla of airplanes over the original picture. That eerie montage stimulates multiple associations, from the saturation bombing of the German capital at the end of World War II to the Berlin Airlift a few years later. The regimented formation of the aircraft also echoes the stiffly ranked Mies apartment houses below them, a pointed criticism of the architect's penchant for an almost militaristic sense of order.

Another allusive work depicts Mies's apartment block of 1926–1927 at the Werkbund housing exhibition in Stuttgart (for which he also served as artistic director and head of planning). Ruff gave the windows of the severe, flat-roofed dwelling the same copper-mirrored coloration as the glass on the former East German parliament building in Berlin: this is the photographer's warning against the totalitarian dangers that are implicit in utopian planning. This consistently engaging series of photographs is the most provocative use of contemporary art to amplify a historical architecture exhibition that I have ever beheld.

Unfortunately, the rest of the installation is badly misjudged. In place of the elegantly subdued palette chosen for the Whitney show, the MoMA team devised a red, yellow, and black scheme, the colors of the German flag of the Weimar Republic and today. Perhaps the idea was suggested by Mies's own use of those colors in the interior of the Barcelona Pavilion, with its black carpet, wine-red curtains, and a wall faced with panels of golden onyx. The overall look of the MoMA mounting is unattractive, and in several instances it is disastrous.

Consider, for example, the placement of Mies's huge charcoal-and-crayon drawing of his Concrete Office Building project of 1923. It is displayed against a screaming scarlet wall, which causes the rendering to throb with optical vibrations, killing what one had thought to have been a visually invincible image. And bilious yellow walls are not the ideal backdrop for Mies's yellowing drawings, either. One can understand the desire to inject chromatic interest into the setting, but Manglano-Ovalle at the Whitney had a much better sense of how to do it. One saving grace of the MoMA installation is a stylish paraphrase of the Silk and Velvet Café that Mies and his early collaborator, the architect Lilly Reich, designed for a Berlin fashion exposition in 1927. In the MoMA re-creation, dark-gray silk panels suspended from curving ceiling tracks provide an uncommonly elegant context for the computers that have become an inevitable if unsightly part of museum displays.

Both exhibitions incorporate the art of Mies's time with great effectiveness, and MoMA's admixture of works by Arp, Duchamp, Grosz, Kandinsky, and others cheek by jowl with Mies's renderings demonstrates the liberating effect of the recent "MoMA 2000" series, which juxtaposed disparate media with an illuminating freedom. Mingling art with architecture would have been unheard of at the time of the last Mies retrospective at MoMA in 1986. That centennial show, curated by Arthur Drexler, the museum's longtime director of architecture and design (who was in ill health and died the following year), was a disappointing affair. It offered no new insights into Mies's work and completely sidestepped issues that begged to be addressed at a time when the basic premises of modernism were under wholesale attack. Indeed, the exhibition was so aloof from contemporary developments that it could well have been organized in 1947, the year of MoMA's first Mies retrospective.

The Whitney show opens with a reunion of some of Mies's small but superb private collection of twentieth-century art—fine paintings and collages by Klee, Kandinsky, and Schwitters. (He knew the first two at the Bauhaus.) In a vitrine next to them are some of the books that had a formative effect on his thinking, including philosophical works by Heidegger, Jaspers, and Maritain. The personal memorabilia adds a revealingly human dimension that has been lacking in our perception of Mies, whose phlegmatic personality and glacial demeanor (at least until he imbibed more of his cherished martinis) has long stood in the way of perceiving him as a flesh-and-blood human being.

As admirable as these two shows and their publications are, there remains an omission so major and so obvious that it is not merely the unacknowledged elephant in the room of this Mies revival, it is the veritable mastodon. In a comprehensive two-part project that is predicated around the turning point of Mies's career—his departure from Berlin to America in 1938—the architect's reasons for deciding to leave Germany, and indeed for choosing to linger there so long into the Hitler regime, are not mentioned at all. Though MoMA's last Mies retrospective lacked new ideas about his architecture, the museum three years later did publish a very significant book, *Mies van der Rohe: Critical Essays*, edited by the Mies biographer Franz Schulze. It addressed the subject's politics with a candor that makes the current show's huge and deplorable lapse all the more indefensible.

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The story is not an edifying one. In his remarkable essay "Mies van der Rohe and the Political Ideology of the Modern Movement in Architecture," the most important of the studies in the Schulze collection, the late architectural historian Richard Pommer mordantly observed that "politically, Mies was the Talleyrand of modern architecture." And he explained: "In less than ten years, he designed the Karl Liebknecht–Rosa Luxemburg Monument for the Communist Party in Germany, the Barcelona Pavilion for the Weimar Republic, a monument to the war dead for the Socialist-led government of Prussia, and a competition for the German Pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair of 1935, which, had it been built, would have been the first Nazi monument of international significance." In addition, just weeks after Hitler's rise to power in 1933, Mies participated in an invitational competition for an addition to the Berlin headquarters of the Reichsbank, the country's central financial institution.

TO SEE THE photographs and the drawings of two of the designs that Pommer mentions—the Liebknecht–Luxemburg Monument with its Red star and its hammer and sickle, the Brussels Pavilion with its swastika—is to realize that the chillingly opportunistic Mies would change party symbols as insouciantly as switching boutonnieres. Owing to his chameleon-like willingness to do the bidding of any master, conventional wisdom has held that Mies was apolitical. But as Pommer demonstrated so devastatingly, the architect was not apolitical, he was pan-political—a very different thing indeed. (In a fascinating addendum to Pommer's essay, Lee Gray reported on Mies's FBI file, which noted Mies's membership on the board of directors of the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions, labeled as a Communist front by the House Un-American Activities Committee in the late 1940s.)

Mies behaved appallingly when he voluntarily put his name to an artists' proclamation published in 1934 in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the Nazi Party rag, on the day before Hitler became president as well as chancellor of the Third Reich. Along with the painter Emil Nolde and the conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler, Mies avowed that "we believe in this Führer who has fulfilled our wish for unity. We trust his work.... [He] has called upon us to stand by him in trust and faith. None of us will be absent when it matters to bear witness." Mies finally absented himself from the Thousand Year Reich, just a year before the war broke out, only when it had become crystal clear to him that he would never make a go of it in the reactionary artistic climate created by the failed architect who ruled Germany. An acquaintance of Mies's reported him spinning a new version of the historical truth soon after he came to America (this, too, is from his FBI dossier): "the Hitler regime ... practically ruined him financially in Germany ... [but he] had not been sufficiently interested in his opposition to actively fight it." There can be little doubt that had Mies been taken up by Hitler, he would have remained in Germany.

TO BE SURE, the record of the other giants of modernism during World War II was pretty dismal. Le Corbusier, though not an outright collaborator, wrote polemics in praise of an unspecified dictatorial authority and shamelessly tried to curry favor with the Vichy regime, relocating for a while in the resort-turned-provisional-capital and precipitating a break with his closest coworkers. When his attempts to get work from the puppet government failed, he fled to the Pyrenees, where he hid for the duration of the occupation. And after Finland made a now-little-remembered alliance with the Nazis against their common enemy the Soviet Union, Alvar Aalto, the greatest Finnish architect, took a disgraceful inspection tour of German construction as late as the summer of 1943, treating the sordid episode as a long running joke. And Frank Lloyd Wright, confounded by the influx of competitive architectural talent from Hitler's Europe, was an ardent supporter of the isolationist America First movement. One of the rare master architects to acquit himself with courage and honor was Gerrit Rietveld, who joined the Dutch Resistance and used his artistic skills to forge passports, identity cards, and ration books.

And let us not forget the early Miesling Philip Johnson, who commissioned a New York apartment from Mies in 1930 (at a time when the German architect had no other work) and included him in the influential International Style exhibition at the fledgling MoMA two years later. Soon afterward Johnson tried unsuccessfully to start a fascist movement in the Midwest, and fairly swooned at a Nazi Party rally in Germany, and stayed on in Berlin after the war started as a correspondent for Father Coughlin's hate-mongering sheet, the Orwellian-titled *Social Justice*. Camp-following the Wehrmacht into Poland, Johnson enthused about the invasion and sent home a series of virulently anti-Semitic dispatches. In one of them, subtitled "Jews Dominate Polish Scene," Johnson wrote: "Once on the Polish side I thought at first that I must be in the region of some awful plague.... There were not even any Poles to be seen in the streets, only Jews!"

One of Johnson's first major projects after resuming his job as architecture and design curator at MoMA after the war was the Mies retrospective in 1947, which jump-started the architect's career in the United States. Its catalog was the first book-length treatment of Mies's work in English. Johnson is now ninety-five years old, and his rare public appearance at the two museums' opening dinner at the Seagram Building (for the construction of which he served as Mies's local associate architect, and designed the interiors of its Four Seasons restaurant) was a piquant reminder of the men's symbiotic and not altogether kosher relationship.

IT WOULD HAVE been wiser for the new MoMA catalog, which delves into such minutiae as Mies's use of photo-montage and the morphology of his courtyard houses, to have addressed the issue of his politics with the same degree of scrupulousness. By ignoring such a central subject in such an otherwise rounded view of Mies, the show gives off a mild stench of cover-up. Among the writers in the catalog, Vittorio Magnano Lampugnani touches briefly on Mies's Reichsbank proposal, and on Hitler's and Albert Speer's megalomaniacal plans for rebuilding the German capital; but his blandly descriptive approach sidesteps any value judgments. Only the German-born Rosemarie Haag Bletter (full disclosure: she is my wife) alludes to the *verboten* topic in her essay on Mies's flirtation with crystal imagery, drawing a sharp parallel between the architect's extensive use of *Kristallglas* (plate glass) and the ensuing devastation of *Kristallnacht*, which erupted just three months after he left for the States.

An honest and impartial investigation by MoMA, the institution most responsible for the creation of the American Mies and for the maintenance of his myth, would have done much to clear the air. Was Mies a willing fellow-traveler of the Hitler gang, or an equal-opportunity panderer, or just a cowardly self-centered cad who abandoned his long-estranged wife, three daughters, and even his long-suffering mistress and collaborator Lilly Reich to endure the coming apocalypse alone after he sailed away to America? The alternative to an authoritative accounting is to leave the field to sensation-seekers such as Elaine S. Hochman, whose overheated but half-baked book, *Architects of Fortune: Mies van der Rohe and the Third Reich*, which appeared in 1989, did no service in the way of setting the historical record straight. So the MoMA show is a great missed opportunity, and quite a bit

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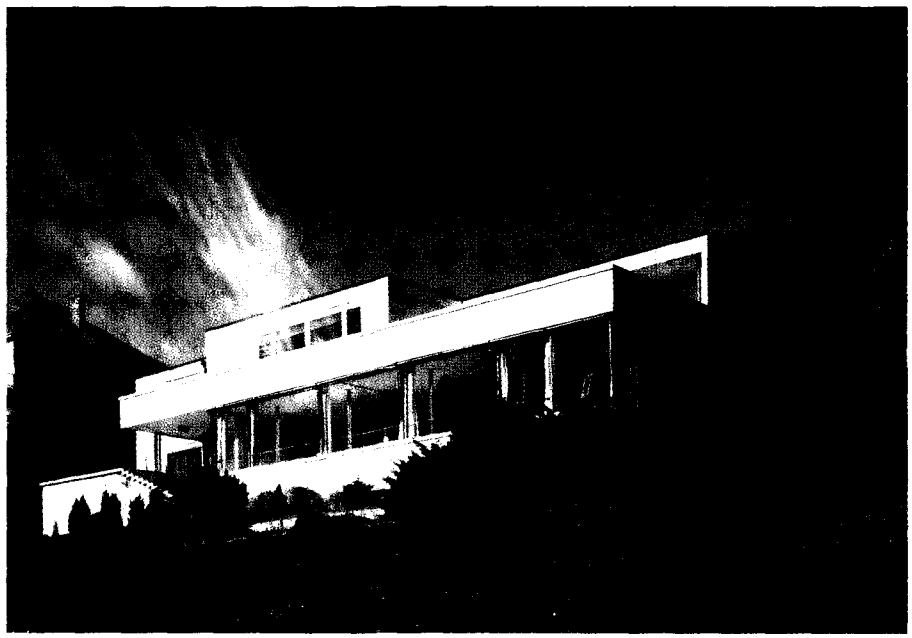
less definitive than it pretends. One can understand Lambert's hero worship of her surrogate father figure Mies, but what is MoMA's excuse for its evasiveness and indifference?

THE MOMA EXHIBITION explores more deeply than ever before Mies's first decade and a half of independent practice, which for the most part consisted of traditional upper-class villas on the outskirts of Berlin. The early Mies design that has attracted the most critical attention in the current show is the Riehl House of 1906–1907 in the suburb of Neubabelsberg, built for the philosopher Alois Riehl, who became the ambitious Mies's cicerone into high intellectual circles. As Barry Bergdoll points out in his catalog essay about the relationship between Mies's architecture and nature, the Riehl House is not far from the dense concentration of country houses that Schinkel built for the Prussian reigning family in the 1820s and 1830s. Mies's design, with its pediment-like façade, addresses the "Royal Road" between the capital of Berlin and the kingly summer seat of Potsdam in an emphatically Schinkelesque manner. With its steeply pitched roof, however, it is in fact more reminiscent of the late Baroque vernacular structures that Schinkel was asked to remodel into classical retreats for his regal clientele.

Nothing in the extensive evidence presented on behalf of this and Mies's other pre-modernist schemes suggests a high place for those works in the twentieth-century architectural canon. Though there are premonitory details here and there, without a previous knowledge of where Mies's career would eventually lead his early houses would seem not much more advanced than the villas being built around Berlin at about the same time by the Anglophile Hermann Muthesius in a modified Arts and Crafts manner. Far better and more truly modern were the contemporaneous residential designs of Heinrich Tessenow, including his stripped vernacular house in the Falkenberg Garden City of 1913–1915 near Berlin and similar housing in the Hellerau Garden City of 1910 onward near Dresden. Search as one might for the seeds of greatness in Mies's juvenilia, he does not rise to exceptional interest until the early 1920s.

Then, with astonishing rapidity, Mies began to produce his celebrated Five Projects, the unexecuted designs in which he demonstrated a breathtaking audacity in the development of innovative architectural space. His Friedrichstrasse Skyscraper project of 1921 in Berlin, best known from his iconic photo-montage showing the proposed building in Expressionist angular perspective, is one of the most singular images of the modern movement. The best model in the MoMA show places a lucite approximation of the crystalline Friedrichstrasse tower in a schematic version of its urban context. (It is far preferable to the house models garishly garnished with fake kelly-green grass and spongy trees that bring to mind a model train set-up, a representational mode for which MoMA has an inexplicable weakness. As useful as models may be for a public unable to extrapolate three-dimensional form from a drawing, such kitschy literalness is no more of an aid to understanding a work of architecture than sophisticated abstraction might be.)

At the time that Mies designed the Friedrichstrasse Skyscraper, the technology did not yet exist for it to be built. This was also the case with his undulating-walled Glass Skyscraper project of 1922. In imagistic terms, though, these proposals pointed the way directly toward the glass-walled towers that he would at long last construct in the United States after World War II, beginning with his high-rise apartment houses of 1948–1951 at 860–880 Lake Shore Drive in Chicago. The embodiment of Mies's proudly self-proclaimed "skin and bones architecture," the cost-efficient format of those modular towers quickly became ubiquitous in the hands of lesser architects and even lesser developers; and eventually they became the cudgel with which the postmodernists tried to beat Mies down. Surely Mies cannot be blamed for the corruption of his ideas by others. And yet his epidermal and skeletal approach left out everything else in the anatomy of the building art—the musculature, the flesh, and ultimately the living spirit itself.



COURTESY MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Mies van der Rohe, Tugendhat House, 1928–1930

Seeing Mies's six-decade career spread out in such detail, his domestic designs display an unending inventiveness and account for his best work. (Though it was not meant to be inhabited, the Barcelona Pavilion may be counted in this company.) The Brick Country House project of 1924 for Neubabelsberg revolves around a pinwheel-like floor plan evoking the staccato horizontals and verticals of the contemporaneous De Stijl paintings of Theo van Doesburg. The Tugendhat House of 1928–1930 in the Czech city of Brno ranks among the most glorious of twentieth-century dwellings, connected to its hillside site with a sensitivity that Wright or Aalto might have envied. The Resor House project of 1937–1938 for Jackson Hole, Wyoming—a flat-roofed wood and glass cabin deluxe to have been set amid stupendous mountain scenery that the window walls would have dramatically framed—showed an intuitive and intimate response to the American landscape.

So did the most lyrical of all of Mies's residences, the Farnsworth House of 1946–1951 in Plano, Illinois. Built on the banks of the Fox River, that white-coated steel and glass box is raised on stilts to protect it from flooding. Those supports, along with the two flights of travertine steps and terraces that lead up to the front door, give it an ethereal gracefulness that is lacking in Philip Johnson's Glass House of 1949–1950 in New Canaan, Connecticut, the earth-bound, classicizing adaptation that the American follower designed after he saw Mies's plans and completed before Mies could erect the Farnsworth House. (Mies was at the time too dependent on Johnson's promotional efforts to

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raise much of a fuss about the younger man's stealing his thunder.)

Among Mies's postwar public buildings, however, only the Seagram Building now stands out. The delicious tension between its chaste form and its luxurious materials remains a part of its enduring appeal; and like few other buildings of its period and its place, it still looks as good from three feet away as it does from three blocks away. What does not remain is the startling impact that the Seagram Building made in its surroundings as they existed when it was completed in 1958. Though the glass-walled Lever House of 1950–1952 by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill already stood diagonally across Park Avenue from the Seagram site, the rest of the street was still a masonry canyon when Mies began his project. This contrast made the Seagram Building pop out with the power of Mies's photo-montages of the 1920s, which showed his proposed structures gleaming with modernist purity amid the leaden Wilhelmine historicism of Berlin. In 1958, the large plaza that Mies insisted on to front the Seagram Building was a rare exception to the almost unbroken street wall. Since then, a plethora of nearby office building plazas (the unfortunate result of well-meaning but wrongheaded zoning policies of the 1960s) has rendered Mies's expansive—and expensive—gesture far less forceful.

In the end, Mies endeavored to create an architecture for all time; but just three decades after his death it is very clear that the architect knew what he was saying when he declared in 1923, with Zarathustran certitude, that "architecture is the will of an epoch translated into space." His influence on twentieth-century culture cannot be overstated: more than any other figure, he formulated what is now generally understood as modern architecture. Still, try as he might to rise above his own troubled epoch and to turn his back on the immediate in his pursuit of the eternal, Mies remained very much a product of his time and his place, of each time and every place in which he found himself. From the vibrant Weimar Berlin that stimulated his freest work, to the cautious modernism that he fine-tuned to ingratiate himself with the Nazis, to the boring and repetitive work that he churned out for corporate America at its conformist apogee, he was indeed the true architect of the century. ■

Virtual Prose

By JAMES WOOD

John Henry Days by Colson Whitehead

(Doubleday, 389 pp., $24.95)

I.

SO IT HAS happened: *Underworld*, the most diffusely influential American novel of recent years, has begun to deliver nameable kin. *John Henry Days*, an extravagantly ambitious novel by the talented young writer Colson Whitehead, is an African American version of Don DeLillo's novel, attempting, like that book, to puzzle out a shattered epic from American life and history. It has many of the virtues and the defects of that earlier work; but it lacks, alas, its lucid, coherent intelligence, and it quite lacks the composure of DeLillo's often distinguished prose.

The fastest way to irritate the lions of late postmodernism is to deny them their meat—that is, to make the obvious point that *Underworld* is really an old-fashioned Dickensian novel, a *Bleak House* of the digital age, which attempts to evoke, in great detail, the interconnectedness of society. It may stream with riffs and essaylets about paranoia, the bomb, J. Edgar Hoover, the poetics of garbage, and so on; but it subscribes to the realistic, even naturalistic belief in novelistic evidence, in the idea that in order to demonstrate something it must be lavishly shown. Thus, since DeLillo believes in some vague, subterranean way that baseball and paranoia and the bomb all connect, he must write a baseball scene at which J. Edgar Hoover is somewhere in the crowd, he must tell us that Bobby Thomson's home run appeared on the same *New York Times* front page as the news that the Russians had detonated their first nuclear bomb in Kazakhstan, and he must follow all this, a hundred or so pages later, with a scene in which a fanatical collector of baseball memorabilia informs us (conveniently enough) that the radioactive core of an atomic bomb is "the exact same size as a baseball."

This naturalism, sometimes persuasive and sometimes a little primitive, this antique massiveness—as if a giant were shuffling historical billboards and thrusting them at us—bloats novelistic form. It pushes the book toward the garrulous and the wasteful. It tends also to the sociological and the didactic, since individuals can never be as powerful as the historical and political forces that, as *Underworld* has been so heavily demonstrating, shape them. DeLillo insists on connections (the atomic bomb is somehow connected to JFK's assassination and to American paranoia) as Dickens's plots insist on connections (wills, lost relatives, distant benefactors, and so on). But unlike the world of Dickens, in *Underworld* there are no connections at the human level, because there are no human beings in the novel, no single individual who absolutely matters and whose consciousness matters absolutely to himself.

DeLillo has said that he writes novels about "the inner life of the culture." But can you write novels about the inner life of the culture without writing about the inner life of characters? Thus the paranoid filiations that DeLillo finds in American society of the last fifty years turn out to be almost entirely conceptual; the novel simply claims this set of rather impressive connections. Yet *Underworld* still believes, naturalistically and old-fashionedly, in evidence. And what is the evidence? The evidence is the form of the book itself, in which everything is repetitively made to connect with everything else. The form of the novel insists: *this is how it is.*

BROADLY, *JOHN HENRY DAYS* shares the form of *Underworld*; and like it, Whitehead's book is really a didactic novel that wants to be honored for not being so. It constructs, out of many varied scenes and characters, a fictional mural of contemporary and historical American life; and—as in *Underworld*—a vast magnet sits at the absent center of this mural, drawing all the scenes and characters to itself. It is July 1996, and the town of Talcott, West Virginia has decided to honor its nineteenth-century black hero, John Henry, with a John Henry weekend. (The story is loosely based on an actual John Henry event, held in Talcott in 1996.) The U.S. Postal Service will issue a John Henry stamp in Talcott, finally marking the memory of the superhumanly strong man who worked for the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad, and who, it is said, competed with and defeated a steam drill one day in 1872, only to die a

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few minutes after his victory.

The novel concerns itself with some of the visitors to Talcott's celebration, and moves freely between them with confident omniscience. We encounter J. Sutter, the book's protagonist, a black freelance journalist, actually a cynical hack, from New York. He and a gang of equally cynical journalistic colleagues meet in Talcott to cover the event. They are called the junketeers, because they move from one publicity event to another, living off free drinks and meals, taking trips on the tabs of various publications, and fiddling expenses, sometimes by submitting stolen receipts.

Whitehead's satire of these knights of negative faith is often funny and inventive, though he prolongs a mock-heroic tone far too long, over hundreds of pages:

> They turn to see Tiny and Frenchie, two fellow mercenaries in their covert war against the literate of America. Hail, hail. They encounter each other on the newsstands, they chafe against one another in the contributors' notes of glossy magazines, but primarily they meet like this, on the eve of war, hungry, sniffing comps and gratis, these things like smoke from a freebie battlefield on the other side of morning. At stake: the primal American right of free speech, the freedom, without fear of censor, to beguile, confuse and otherwise distract the people into plodding obeisance of pop. Their ideals: the holy inviolability of the receipt, two dollars a word, travel expenses. The junketeers are soldiers, and they hail each other.

Whitehead's satire is aimed at these journalists, and they excite some of his best writing and some of his worst. For now, it will be enough to note the slightly determined liveliness in the passage above, and its repetitiveness ("mercenaries . . . eve of war . . . freebie battlefield . . . soldiers"—surely time for an armistice on the war metaphors, no?), and the relentlessness of the mock-heroic tone, and the way the prose is dartingly foxed by incoherence: what does it mean to compare "comps and gratis" (itself a peculiar conjoining of a noun and an adjective, somewhat akin to writing "riches and poor") to "smoke from a freebie battlefield on the other side of morning"? What is "the other side of morning"?

Other guests include Pamela Street, a Brooklyn woman whose late father was obsessed with John Henry, and who had an enormous collection of John Henry memorabilia (reminiscent of Marvin Lundy, the collector of baseball memorabilia in *Underworld*); Alphonse Miggs, a shy stamp collector from Bethesda, Maryland, who has his own, sinister plans for the event; and Lucien Joyce, a p.r. chief from Manhattan who has organized most of the weekend. Whitehead pans—the cinematic image is apt—between these people, in short scenes of only a few pages at a time. In addition, as his story of the weekend in Talcott progresses, he moves backward every so often, into personal and collective memory: he fills us in on J. Sutter's early days at *The Downtown News*—a very loyal, not to say velvet-veiled, portrait of *The Village Voice*; and also on Pamela Street's crazed father; and then further back still to the middle-class Harlem childhood of J. Sutter's mother, Jennifer. The novel also splices a short chapter set inside the head of Paul Robeson, who briefly played John Henry on stage.

What else? For no obvious reason, one of the junketeers tells the story, which takes fourteen pages, of the Stones's murderous Altamont concert in 1969. We encounter Guy Johnson, a real-life black historian, who visited West Virginia in the 1920s, and wrote a book in 1929 called *John Henry: Tracking Down a Negro Legend* (it is cited in the acknowledgments). We spend a few pages with Moses, a black singer seen performing in Chicago, who sometimes sang a ballad of John Henry. (These pages remind one a little of the passages in *Underworld* in which DeLillo novelized Lenny Bruce on stage.) Most importantly, scattered throughout the novel, again in short excerpts, is a novelized evocation of John Henry himself, and his path toward his momentous struggle with the steam drill.

John Henry Days is daring, nervy, knowing, and smart. Like *Underworld*, it is a bristle of bricolage; but unlike that book, it gives off, despite its bulk, a curious fear of longevity, of entanglement. Its mode is generally filmic—the rapidity of cutting seems more important than the depth of scenes, as if Whitehead were continually saying to himself, "Keep it moving, keep it moving!"

Narratively, the novel is chronically restless. It is not just that we are bounced from Talcott in 1996 to Talcott in 1872, back to 1996 again, then to Harlem in the 1940s, or to Talcott in the 1920s, and so on; or that we move every ten or so pages from character to character. It is also that the novel varies its modes of storytelling: turn the page and the reader may leave Talcott to overhear a three-page conversation, laid out as a film script, between two postal workers in a bar in Washington, D.C.; or may read an imagined press release from the U.S. Postal Service, announcing the issue of the John Henry stamp; or may come upon a two-page chapter of legalese about the regulations concerning gun ownership in Maryland; or may inhabit, for a chapter, the life of the nineteeenth-century owner of the C&O Railroad.

Whitehead's book is at once wildly centrifugal and dogmatically centripetal. For although the plot moves outwards, continually fattening itself on new historical textures, almost every scene exists to dress a single theme: the novel's inquiry into the John Henry myth and its place in American life. Musicologists, singers, hobbyists, journalists, public relations flacks: they all revolve around John Henry. Even the chapter about J. Sutter's mother, set in Harlem in the 1940s, which is one of the best passages in the book, builds to a moment in which the little girl tries to play "The Ballad of John Henry" on the piano, and is rebuked by her genteel mother for playing "gutter music." There is barely a page in the book that does not mention John Henry.

This DeLillo-like level of connectedness gives *John Henry Days* a paranoid form, even though the novel is not about paranoia. The John Henry story is, in effect, the novel's organizing "Underworld," its political unconscious. John Henry penetrates everything here, as the bomb penetrates everything in *Underworld*. The effect is somewhat imprisoning, somewhat didactic; this is a themed novel, and even its moments of free and properly gratuitous life are finally brought back, by the structure of the book's form, to the mighty monad of its theme. The reader finds himself, once a new chapter has begun, living not so much in the free life of the characters as waiting for the inevitable moment when John Henry will make his inexorable thematic entrance.

It cannot be said that Whitehead's characters have much depth of life. They are lively—Whitehead allows his characters plenty of cleverness, so that his conversation often glitters—and enlivened by a generous comic spirit. But they are awarded little more than the characteristics essential to their roles in the allegory. The junketeers, as you would imagine, are cynical, knowing, shallow, verbal; Pamela Street, having been introduced as the victim of her father's obsession, stays "in character," insofar as she has one, for the rest of the book; Alphonse Miggs, the sinister stamp collector, is exactly that and nothing more; Lucien, the p.r. chief, spends the whole novel imagining life as a series of p.r. exercises. Fictively, this is very much the kind of universe in which a truck driver will think continually of trucks. Whitehead's people are defined sociologically, which is to say, allegorically; it would be very hard to describe one of these characters, were you to rob him of his occupation or hobby,

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or were you to take him away from the subject of John Henry.

THIS IS NOT necessarily a weakness, at least not in this kind of novel: caricature, a bright blot of stable essence, can be a way of sticking to the point, and allegories need to exclude distraction. *John Henry Days* is, all in all, an interestingly typical, almost canonically contemporary American novel (though, to be fair, it is untypical in its intelligence and its scope); its mode is essentially allegorical; its concerns are social, historical, and linguistic (rather than characterological, aesthetic, and metaphysical); its fractured but connected pieces suggest an interest in the amassing of a web of information, a network of different knowledges; and its prose—which is always performing, present-tensed, sharp-sloppy, a kind of *jolie laide* mixture of the ugly and the pert—borrows freely from journalistic and technical discourses, and spills itself rapidly, sometimes inundating coherence and the drier forms of lucidity on its vivacious way.

Whitehead has a gift for allegorical patterning. One of the finer qualities of his novel lies in the intelligent way he uses the noble John Henry to illuminate, and indeed to shadow, the contemporary shallowness of his hero, J. Sutter. John Henry fought a great fight with a steam drill; J. Sutter, by contrast, is only struggling to break the junketeers' record, held by a fabled colleague named Bobby Figgis. That record is nine months' junketeering—notionally, an event a day for a year, but Figgis reached only his ninth month—and Sutter has already chalked up three uninterrupted months.

As with everything relating to the junketeers, we hear too much about "the record," too much about Bobby Figgis (Bobby Figgis, who "had been devoured by pop"), and too much about a very DeLillo-like institution called "The List" (a secret list of pliable journalists maintained by the p.r. guy). Still, there is an authentic piquancy in the prospect of two so very different challenges: John Henry, free but virtually enslaved by the C&O railroad, killed but not vanquished by the machine of the new, modern industrial age; and J. Sutter, free but unwittingly enslaved by the machinery of late capitalist information, morally vanquished by a pointless struggle. The method of juxtaposition is perhaps a little obvious, a little heavily sarcastic, as befits mock-heroic comparison. It is the kind of comparison that Swift implies in one of his poems, when he makes fun of a cynical actress by calling her "a beautiful nymph." J. Sutter (his curious name hovering perhaps close to "sutler," a camp follower selling provisions to soldiers) is judged and prodded by the presence in the novel of John Henry.

Nor is the flow of judgment only one-way. Whitehead does not employ the John Henry story as mere moral chorus. There is no reflexive reverence toward the past. He uses his collage of materials—the various ballads, the 1920s historian, the Talcott celebration—to cast doubt on the stability of the nineteenth-century tale. Who knows how heroic John Henry really was? All that is certain is that the town of Talcott, West Virginia—and, by extension, America—needs to borrow the John Henry story for its own purposes. Whitehead uncoils his various ironies smartly, chief of which is the sight of poor white Appalachians, the natives of unimportant Talcott, bulking out their negligible prestige by recourse to the possibly apocryphal story of a disenfranchised black worker.

That these ironies largely run themselves, once the novel has established its mise-en-scène, does not diminish Whitehead's skill in first mobilizing them. There is often an entrepreneurial element to the finding of a story, the patenting of a novelistic idea, as Gogol knew when he forbade his friends to mention the title of his novel in progress, for fear that it would reveal the book's secret and single idea—a single, brilliant idea, which Gogol hotly syndicates in chapter after chapter. And at certain moments in *John Henry Days*, as Talcott flourishes its possession of John Henry, one does indeed recall a scene in *Dead Souls*, in which a Russian landowner who never cared much for his serfs when they were alive becomes protective on their behalf only when they are dead.

II.

YET GOGOL WROTE great prose, and Whitehead writes what might best be called interesting prose—extraordinarily uneven, and sometimes barely comprehensible, not to mention smutted with inexplicable solecisms. What most clearly distinguishes *John Henry Days*, what marks it as a certain kind of sophisticated, wised-up contemporary novel, is its busy, loose prose, at once highly considered—a real style—and rushingly careless. There is a curious mixture here of aestheticism and an urge to disown aestheticism; of earnestness and a fear of earnestness, accompanied by a quick scamper into the warren of irony; of literary registers (an abundance of metaphor, for instance) with harder, colder, newer discourses (sociology, new journalism, computer-speak, the vocabularies of public relations and commerce).

Whitehead's models may be various: perhaps the freaked allegorist Thomas Pynchon is somewhere behind this, perhaps DeLillo and David Foster Wallace and Dave Eggers, perhaps the fogged yearnings of rock journalism and the parish poetry of the semi-literate theorists at *The Village Voice* (Whitehead worked as a television critic for that paper), perhaps the mad fluency and the near-modernist pulse of e-mail. Whatever the influences, Whitehead's prose seems decidedly a contemporary instance, a prose of the virtual age that is often merely virtual: imprecise, swaggering when it should be controlled, fruitlessly dense, grossly abundant.

AT HIS BEST Whitehead is a good stylist, able to fuse a journalistic smartness with a properly literary attentiveness. There is a marvelous three-page description of the John Henry fair in Talcott, full of sharp details—"the grill of the Italian sausage stand resembles the floor of a garage"—and animated by a perfect equipoise of tone, at once indulgent and haughtily amused, in a caught balance not so far from Woolf's description of an English fair in *Between the Acts*: "the scratching of Velcro vies for attention with distant crickets." Equally, he writes with real subtlety about J. Sutter's mother in Harlem. Describing a day when the little girl goes for the first time to an alluring basement record store and then emerges into sunlight, Whitehead writes: "The sun is twice as bright once she leaves the store, until her eyes adjust again to this average world." That adjective "average" is finely chosen, and works as literature should, compressing energies into fierce units: "average" immediately tells us a great deal about the exciting strangeness, to Jennifer, of that basement shop.

Even when Whitehead is not writing at this level, and is buzzing along more journalistically, he is frequently funny and precise, and snaps easily into aphorism. Of one of the junketeers he observes: "Dave Brown's byline is a roach whose gradual infestation of the world's print media can only be sketchily documented." Dave Brown is seen, amusingly, wearing "his trademark president-for-life khaki jacket." Later Alphonse Miggs, the suburban stamp collector, is crisply introduced: "He had a good job, for example; middle management was only a better tie away."

This lucidity only makes more bemusing Whitehead's frequent unwillingness to be lucid. There are, to begin with, many snarls of sense and grammar, some of which bespeak a sleepy or over-generous editor. At the Talcott fair, for instance, Whitehead writes that "those who walk around with pebbles in their shoes and those who remove pebbles immediately form discreet groups," when he really means "discrete." At the same fair, White-

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head writes, "the baby won't fall asleep and that little song that always works isn't today," when he should write "doesn't today." At the same fair, we encounter the phrase "Lucien and the ice cream melt in the heat at deviant rates," when "divergent" is the needed word. (Deviant ice cream sounds like ad copy for Ben & Jerry's.)

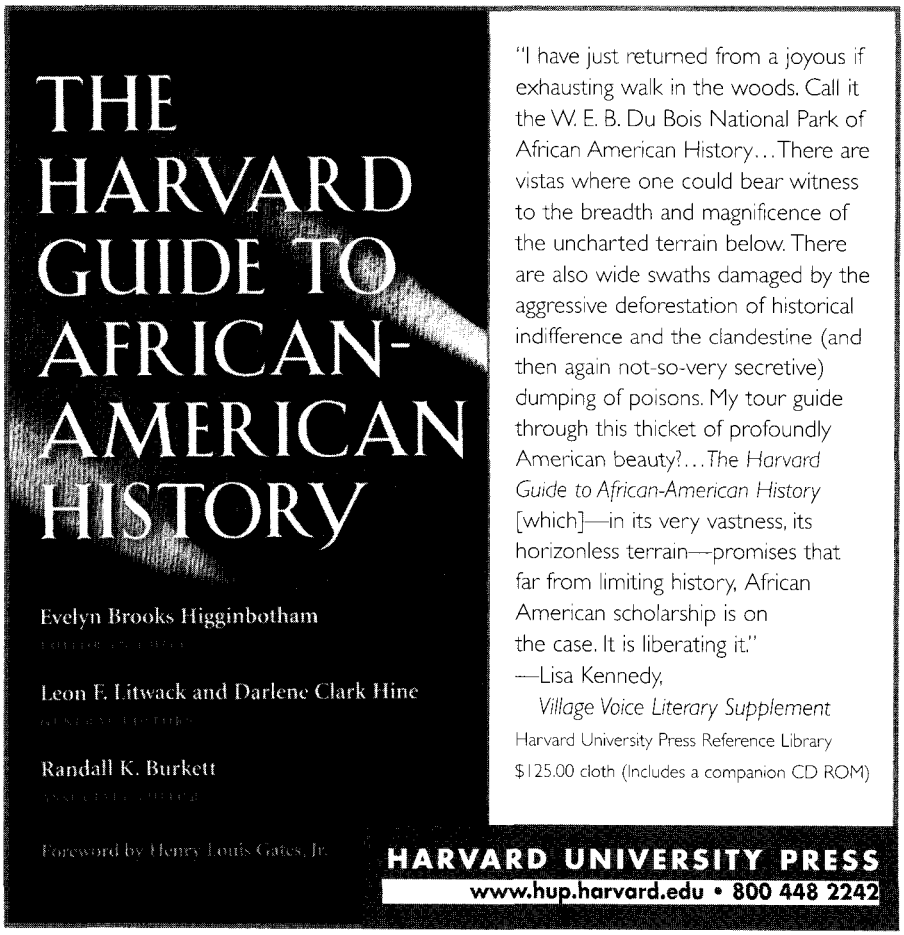
Elsewhere we read: "the public is inured against [*sic*] such mundane crises"; "the article elaborated about [*sic*] a psychological need"; "he evacuated his chair" (which sounds painful). When J. Sutter goes to work at *The Downtown News*, he comes home eager to tell his parents what he has heard at the office: "At dinner, he reiterated some of the dialogue from Kramer's and Blumenthal's conversations." But since reiteration generally means self-repetition ("I reiterate that ..."), this sentence is impossible, and has the meaning "he said again some of the dialogue." Finally: "He tapped ash on the coarse tile of the hotel Sun Deck Lounge, eschewing for reasons of his own the elegant ashtray proximate his hand"—which one might describe as a sentence proximate gibberish.

ERRORS ARE CORRIGIBLE, and certainly forgivable; but error is sewn deep into the prose here, and is not easily unpicked. Alas, one suspects that some of this is considered (as, say, William T. Vollmann probably decided to mangle his subjunctives in his last novel). Take for example that phrase "Lucien and the ice cream melt in the heat at deviant rates." Whitehead might say that "deviant" is not an absolutely impossible usage, since everyone knows what he means; or he might say that it is his task to explode the idea of possibility in English, a language constantly expanding; and even if he did not say this, he would almost certainly not consider the sentence preposterous or ugly, or else he would not have written it. He wants to import that word "deviant," he wants to make the sentence sound clever, he wants the reader to stop for a moment and figure it out, and he wants the borrowed authority of a pseudo-scientific word, just as he does when he elsewhere writes of the "emphysematous gurgle" of a pool of water, or commits this sentence: "Once in a while one of them said I love you, to flat sonant agreement from the other pillow." What is important is precisely the presence of these apparently alien words—"deviant," "sonant"—and the cool technical shiver of their official discourse. The aim is to borrow the precision that a word such as "deviant" enjoys in its own discourse, and then to assault its precision in a new, looser, literary context. An aestheticism is at work, whereby any kind of word can be claimed and swallowed by style; but this is a curious version of aestheticism, for the result is not aesthetic, or even very attractive.

It is not exaggerated to call this a kind of deconstruction of the language. And for some of this Whitehead should be praised. He yearns for a prose with modern lights. He seeks edge, bustle, interruption. The language, particularly in America, can stand some turbulence. But too often this leads to very strained effects, which run away with the writer. He tends excessively to anthropomorphize his inanimate objects, apparently in order to squeeze from them as much metaphor as he can. Thus the mountains near Talcott, which have had a road driven between them, are described as "still grudgeful after all these years at their sunderance" (a truly ugly sentence), and the strip malls in West Virginia are also given personalities: "But each creation is botched and maladjusted, it will not play with the other kids or has a morbid disposition, and subsides, inevitably, into the silence of black country road."

One chapter opens with J. Sutter leaving his motel room, wearing sunglasses: "So armed, thus fortified, J. traverses the hazy border between parking lot and gravel and the half-tamed dirt of country road shoulder, a disputed area this, every rain betrays the ceasefire in a violent push, every car wheel in and out of the Talcott Motor Lodge shifts the balance of power, foreign aid." This is straightforwardly bad writing, a squabble of excess. There is an absolute loss of control and, above all, of proportion. It might be one thing for Wordsworth to consider the Simplon Pass in this manner; but it is ridiculous for Whitehead to make this much imagery out of a road shoulder. Whitehead is drawn to border imagery. Two hundred pages later he describes Pamela, who has been smoking, opening the window of her motel room: "The breeze wants into room 14 as much as the smoke wants out, and they negotiate border crossings." Again the effort races ahead of the effect.

But it is at least comprehensible. The following sentence is not: "The place mats of Herb's Country Style aspire to the perspectives of mountain divinities, bought in bulk and fixing a century of scrabbling achievement in its just form on the diaphanous paper." If you are grindingly hermeneutic, with a morning to waste, you may at last realize, after many readings, that Whitehead is telling us that the place mats have maps drawn on them (hence they "aspire to the perspectives of mountain divinities"). Yet the sentence reads like an exercise in comic periphrasis—of the children's book kind: "U is for umbrella. An umbrella is a mushroom in


THE HARVARD GUIDE TO AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY
Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham
Leon F. Litwack and Darlene Clark Hine
Randall K. Burkett
Foreword by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
"I have just returned from a joyous if exhausting walk in the woods. Call it the W. E. B. Du Bois National Park of African American History... There are vistas where one could bear witness to the breadth and magnificence of the uncharted terrain below. There are also wide swaths damaged by the aggressive deforestation of historical indifference and the clandestine (and then again not-so-very secretive) dumping of poisons. My tour guide through this thicket of profoundly American beauty?... The Harvard Guide to African-American History [which]—in its very vastness, its horizonless terrain—promises that far from limiting history, African American scholarship is on the case. It is liberating it."
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deep mourning that likes to wash a lot"—not least because the syntax causes one to think that it is the mountain divinities that have been bought in bulk rather than the place mats. And the editor who let this foolishness pass failed to inform Whitehead that Herb's Country Style mysteriously becomes Herb's Family Style on the next page.

One of the culprits, again, is Whitehead's mock-heroic style, and his determination to maintain it through thick and thin. This is clearly apparent in a passage in which J. Sutter recalls being out late at night in Brooklyn, in Fort Greene. Sutter is writing a piece, and has left his apartment for some beer. He is a little nervous, since, as Whitehead tells us, with comic-solemn fanfare: "The freaks come out at night." Cautiously Sutter rounds a corner, mindful of an unlit area, "where streetlights stare blindly, handicapped by vandalism and city neglect, where shadows confab to trade samizdat decrying illumination." (That anthropomorphism again. Also, the image is not only absurd, it is inconsistent: if the shadows were distributing samizdat literature decrying illumination, their samizdat would presumably be rebelling against the yoke of illumination, which would mean that the street was, in fact, brutally illuminated.)

Standing in line at the bodega, J. Sutter sees a neighborhood addict approaching: "J. sees him zigzagging down the street, stymieing snipers of euthanasiac bent who might be roosting on the Brooklyn rooftops, an out-of-control prop plane in for an uneasy landing." It is not necessary to argue the atrocity of this sentence. What is interesting is not so much its busted coherence, its anarchy of registers and metaphors, its coarse unreality, but the phrase "euthanasiac bent." Again, a mock-heroic periphrasis: a sniper is no more a euthanasiast than J. Sutter and his friends are "mercenaries" in a "covert war." Whitehead wants this tone, this clumsiness, this quasi-political glamour, even though it sometimes lends the book a sophomoric facetiousness. (This is the same book that Jonathan Franzen described in *The New York Times* as "sumptuously written.")

Why would Whitehead be drawn to write in this way? Not all of the blame, after all, can be laid at the door of *The Village Voice*, that tuneless organ, Whitehead's quondam employer. At times, as in the balancing of John Henry's struggle with J. Sutter's struggle, the satiric tone works with considerable power and delicacy. But palpably, satire is obstructing something in the case of this sentence, and in many others like it. The character of its prose always leads us to the center of a novel's meaning. In this case, the prose suggests obstruction and avoidance: Whitehead seems to be evading not just simplicity (and it is sometimes good to evade simplicity), but earnestness and truthfulness. In place of accuracy, haze; in place of silence, noise. The Brooklyn street becomes a kind of opera set, and the book a libretto. Just as snipers are not euthanasiasts, so there are no snipers on Brooklyn roofs, not even in the roughest neighborhoods. The sentence has simply ceased to refer. It is instead crying, *Look at me, look at me!*

T.S. Eliot once praised Lancelot Andrewes for having a style that exhibited a mastery of "relevant intensity." A great deal of contemporary American fiction by younger writers lives off the inversion of that quality: it is bursting with irrelevant intensity. One reason for this may be that the comedy of culture has begun to seem more important, more pressing, to younger writers than the comedy of character. Our culture, which seems—and is—newly frenzied, appears to demand a corresponding frenzy of response; a way of "capturing the madness of the times." Yet correspondence is not encapsulation but surrender, as suggested by the old joke about the chameleon that landed on a tartan rug and exploded.

Whitehead ought to know this, for his novel is most successful when, from a stable confidence, it probes and pushes its historical material into fresh visibility. The power of the mock-heroic, of satire itself, rests on such a firm pedestal, a good base. Elsewhere, however, his wild evasions seem not satirical but actually an evasion of satire, and deeply weaken the moral form of his novel. Too often Whitehead writes an ungrounded prose, which draws uncomfortably close to the kind of writing that J. Sutter and his coevals might produce. The shame is that at such moments Whitehead loses his ability to referee between John Henry and J. Sutter, between the unstable past and the ungrounded present—and seems instead like a player on the side of the corrupted present, full of noise and irrelevant intensity. ■

How we travel now.

Booking Passage

By Nicholas Howe

I.

"I never travel without books either in peace or in war," Montaigne observed in the sixteenth century. Books offer "ease and comfort," even if the traveler who carries them rarely opens them, as he admitted. It is enough that they form part of the traveler's kit on the road and through life: a resource to relieve tedium, to transport one to a pleasant place when the airplane sits grounded on the runway for hours or the food on the train runs out. Against such annoyances, there is always the volume stashed in one's bag like emergency rations.

And more often than not, it is a book that got the traveler into this fix in the first place. Reading about places seems naturally to lead to going to places, sometimes even for the purpose of retracing the path of a book that one has loved; and retracing can lead, in turn, to more writing. The boundary between travel and writing is easy to trespass. At their most literal, books that claim to follow "in the footsteps of . . ." are pilgrimages to devotional sites; and their ritual lies in repeating someone else's experience in order to know vicariously a moment of revelation or sublimity.

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The Best American Travel Writing 2000
edited by Bill Bryson
(Houghton Mifflin, 307 pp., $13 paper)

Return Passages: Great American Travel Writing, 1780–1910
by Larzer Ziff
(Yale University Press, 304 pp., $29.95)

Fresh Air Fiend: Travel Writings, 1985–2000
by Paul Theroux
(Houghton Mifflin, 466 pp., $15 paper)

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That such books often read as chronicles of disappointment suggests the perils of direct imitation: the unspoiled beach that was the site of somebody else's epiphany a hundred years ago is now blanketed with high-rise hotels, and the locals have abandoned their little bistro for the ease of fast food. Unlike texts, places change; and they often change because they have been described in texts.

Chances are, of course, that the beach was never as idyllic nor the bistro as charming as the books first made them appear. Claiming that they were, though, is part of what turns travel writers into con artists, and their bored housebound readers into easy marks. Much travel writing relies on the traveler's claim of having been to a place before it was spoiled, went bad, lost its charm, got electricity, became Americanized. In sum: after the golden age of the place was over, but before you—the reader, and thus inescapably the belated traveler—could get there. Once it becomes clear that a place is not inhabited by monsters or cannibals or Amazons, and that its topographical features have been delineated to allow for safe navigation, then it can become a destination for the adventurous traveler who is prepared to risk annoyances and miseries, though probably not death, to go there and write it up.

AFTER THE EXPLORERS have come and gone, the adventure that remains for those who follow is rough travel. Books offering that kind of travel can also follow "in the footsteps," with the difference being that their writers model themselves more loosely on the style of travelers who risked life and limb rather than on the itinerary of a specific author. Recent works that offer themselves in the metaphorical footsteps of old-time travelers include, to name a couple of very different examples, *Into the Heart of Borneo*, by Redmond O'Hanlon, published in 1984, and *Danziger's Travels: Beyond Forbidden Frontiers*, by Nick Danziger, published in 1987. Books of this sort, fueled by curiosity and testosterone, have the salutary effect of making us feel that much of the world remains dangerous today precisely because it is inhabited not by monsters but by our fellow human beings.

One could say that Danziger and O'Hanlon tell of their journeys into our postmodern and postcolonial hearts of darkness, were it not that Conrad's metaphor, through overuse by glib travel writers, has passed into farce. Almost every travel writer who makes the allusion to Conrad's novel has surely forgotten that Marlow tells his tale about the heart of darkness while on a yawl moored in the Thames estuary. And, more to the point, that Marlow says of this river that it also "has been one of the dark places of the earth": Conrad meant to remind us with this observation that the place where a story gets told is also a dark place. Easy distinctions between the exotic locale where one travels and the familiar place where one writes miss Conrad's meaning. As examples of travel writing, though, Danziger's and O'Hanlon's books may claim roots deep in the work of eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century British and Continental travelers who wrote of African and Asian regions that were already, or were soon to become, European colonies.

Other writers, never expecting the places that they seek to remain unchanged, follow more knowingly in the footsteps of their predecessors. Indeed, they travel in order to explore the changes worked by time since the place was visited by the writer whose path they are repeating. These are travel writers alive to the demands of literary representation and readerly desire; they know that the most successful journey narratives are an act of collusion between the writer's artistry and the reader's willingness *not* to suspend belief. Such writers do not work within the narcissistic categories of "spoiled" and "unspoiled"—terms that tell us far more about a traveler's need for a place than about the place itself—but within a more historically informed appreciation of then and now. And, more importantly, they are aware of the tradition in which they follow.

Writers as otherwise dissimilar as Richard Holmes or Bruce Chatwin no more pretend to be the first to write of a place in a certain manner than they delude themselves that they have found spots untouched by the modern world. Holmes's *Footsteps* includes a chapter about his experience of tracking the route that Robert Louis Stevenson and his donkey took in the Cevennes in 1878. It is as much a critical reading of an early travel account as it is a reflection on the intervening years and on the meaning of travel after the invention of the internal combustion engine. Chatwin's *In Patagonia* is an extended retracing of writers whose tales made the author throw off his chic job at Sotheby's in London and head for the tip of Latin America in pursuit of Charles Darwin and W. H. Hudson, as well as of his own eccentric uncle Charley Milward the Sailor.

Travel writing as a genre has its own laws of influence and invention, not least because the desire to journey somewhere is often born in one's childhood reading. The curious and sometimes confusing overlap between "travel writing" and "adventure writing" in the last two hundred years owes much to writers' youthful encounters with accounts of parts unknown and places far away, books about exotic outposts and doughty explorers. Constrained from wandering by law and circumstances, children are all the more acutely alive to the sense that travel is a precondition for adventure. As the narrator of James Joyce's "An Encounter" says: "But real adventures, I reflected, do not happen to people who remain at home: they must be sought abroad." This childhood epiphany is recaptured in the familiar moment when a travel writer remembers the first time he saw the name of an exotic place or when she first realized that she could grow up and travel far from home.

Yet these moments of recollection, when the thwarted child-traveler is liberated, should not be confused with a mature writer's understanding of his or her influences and place in the history of the genre. Just as the traveler's vanity is to preen himself on having visited a place before anyone else, so the travel writer's vanity is to feign ignorance of all those who wrote before. Or, more extremely, to reject any previous account for fear that it might prejudice the traveler's vision. Mistaking ignorance for authenticity, such writers seem untroubled by the thought that a traveler without prior perceptions of a place is likely to be banal and hardly worth reading.

THIS PRACTICE OF bookless traveling seems especially common among contemporary Americans, who, true to our nation's fabled denial of history, write as if they were the first to have emerged from parts unknown with a story to tell. Paul Theroux unabashedly confesses this desire in *The Pillars of Hercules* (1995): "*No one has ever described the place where I have just arrived*: this is the emotion that makes me want to travel. It is one of the greatest reasons to go anywhere." Yet if contemporary travel writers were to reflect on Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1799) or Alexander Kinglake's *Eothen* (1844) or Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (1897), to cite only a few classic British examples, they would have to admit that the places have indeed all been described. Going back further, to Herodotus, Strabo, Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta, and Benjamin of Tudela, would only make the point more evident: it is too late for encounters with unknown places to justify travel writing.

For as long as people have been writing about their journeys, they have been telling tales of the strange and the wondrous, of the tedious and the annoying, of the signs of past grandeur, of the petty nuisances of travel, of their encounters

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with danger, of their romances with strangers, of their moments of doubt at having ventured from home, of their distaste for the nasty food and the repellent natives. The names of places change, the conveyances become faster, the duration of the journey grows briefer—but the most accomplished travel writers know that the stories they tell follow the same patterns as did the stories heard or read centuries before, the stories that made them leave home in the first place.

As we learn from accounts by merchant travelers such as Marco Polo, stories are the most portable tradegood in the world. Not subject to theft, spoilage, customs duties, or other perils of the road, they pass freely from place to place. They are also what travelers carry back from their experiences elsewhere to offer as their tradegood to the reader. Most of these stories are knockoffs of earlier stories, retellings of old traveler's tales set in another region. Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* may be a virtuoso postmodern retelling of Marco Polo, but it is also proof that the best travel writers are those who know the lineage of their stories, who know the library that they have left behind as well as the territory that they seek ahead.

Finally, it is collecting stories that justifies the insane risks of hard travel. At a moment when Michael Fay, a contemporary American naturalist, can make headlines for his bravery in walking across uninhabited regions of northern Congo, complete with airdrops of supplies and teams of reporters, it is worth remembering an earlier example of rough travel. The Scotsman Mungo Park went into West Africa in 1795 for the African Association, directed by Sir Joseph Banks. His ostensible mission was to locate the Niger River and to determine once and for all the direction of its flow, a matter that had troubled travel writers and geographers since Herodotus first raised it in the fifth century B.C.E. Park entered Africa equipped with English guns, compasses, books, and clothing. A year and half later, he emerged from his astonishing travels with nothing of his original kit left but his hat.

Into his hat Park had crammed his travel notes. These became in turn the basis for his *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa,* a book that promoted the European colonization of the region and inspired generations of Europeans and Americans to venture there as traders, explorers, and writers. Park was proudest of having answered Herodotus's question about the Niger's course—it flowed east—both because it was a matter of scientific truth and because it connected him, as traveler and writer, with the long tradition that had inspired his expedition. He got where he wanted to go because he had first read about it.

II.

Judging from many of the pieces in *The Best American Travel Writing 2000*, we travel today for adventure. Or, perhaps more accurately, we read travel writers to hear about adventures set in exotic places. Bill Bryson, who has written several amiably modest travel books about familiar landscapes of Europe and the United States, declares equivocally in his introduction to the volume: "That the geographical spread of this collection is so largely exotic pleases me no end, but I should note that it is less a reflection of my own predispositions than those of the publications from which these selections were culled." These magazines include, to name a few, *Outside*, *National Geographic Adventure*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *Men's Journal*, and *Escape*. These are all likely sources for articles about what Bryson calls "risky travel to challenging places."

One might also call this genre "testosterone travel" or "exploraporn." For the testing of masculinity figures frequently in these pieces, as do seductive appeals to vicarious experience. These accounts are today's versions of the adventure stories that ran thirty or fifty years ago in barbershop or cigar-store magazines such as *Argosy*: sagas of peril in the jungle or in the desert, for real men with hair on their chests and time on their hands.

Consider Tom Clynes's "The Toughest Trucker in the World," about Garry White, an Australian who runs diesel fuel to a remote tourist "wilderness lodge" in Australia in a truck named Pegasus, the cab doors of which are emblazoned with pictures of winged horses. This alone should tell us that there is a whole lot of myth-making going on in this sort of travel writing. Anyone who names his truck after a horse with supernatural abilities imagines himself as something far more than a workingman "swaggin' across the torture tracks of Cape York," as Clynes describes White. When Clynes verbalizes White's secret feelings about driving—"And if you happen to love it, you sure as hell don't let them know"—he turns the truck driver into a character from a Hollywood movie, not the awful "outlaw trucker" in movies such as *Convoy* that he cites, but one made by a director who has read too much Hemingway. He reminds me of Humphrey Bogart in *They Drive by Night*, though (alas) without Ida Lupino.

Clynes is a skillful writer with an eye for detail and a terse style that works for this piece. But after I enjoyed it, I had to wonder in what way it could usefully be called travel writing. That the genre is amorphous is, of course, a notorious fact. Theroux puts it bluntly in *Fresh Air Fiend*: "Travel books are hardly a form at all." Still, in *The Best American Travel Writing 2000*, the genre seems open to any piece of writing that involves movement or transit from one place to another. Beyond that, I could deduce no coherent principle for selection. Thus, in addition to Clynes on trucking in Australia, we find a piece by William Booth on a yacht race from California to Mexico, which properly belongs in a boating magazine; another by Rolf Potts on trying to crash a movie set in Thailand, which would not be out of place in a teen fanzine; and one by Steve Rushin on playing golf in Greenland that must have read very well when it first appeared in *Sports Illustrated*. These articles seem only tenuously related to the genre as it is represented elsewhere in this book by such pieces as Tim Cahill on a barge going down the Congo River, Dave Eggers on hitchhiking in Cuba, and Jeffrey Tayler on China's wild west or, better yet, a small town outside Moscow.

The distinction between movement and travel is a matter of some moment to the genre of travel writing. Movement is about burning fuel so you can say you have been somewhere and have safely returned. Travel, especially as it is given form by the writer, is about observing and recording. In this distinction, the place of destination hardly matters. The vacuous Microsoft slogan—"Where do you want to go today?"—perfectly expresses the contemporary promise of empty movement; and the best retort to it is the cussedness of Thoreau's remark that "I have traveled a good deal in Concord."

Reading through the twenty-five pieces in this volume, I found myself inventing a rule of thumb: the more likely a writer is to talk about adventure explicitly, the less thoughtful his piece (these writers almost always are men) will be. In "Storming *The Beach*," Potts offers this reason for crashing the set of a film starring Leonardo DiCaprio: "The primary motivation for my mission is not an obsession with Hollywood, but simply a vague yearning for adventure. I wish I could put this yearning into more precise terms, but I can't. All I can say is that adventure is hard to come by these days." Much contemporary travel writing is no longer driven by obsession, that quality found in the great, haunting travel books that last for more than a season; it is driven instead by this vague, inexpressible "yearning for adventure," which can find in Leonardo

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DiCaprio an occasion for fulfillment. How bored we have become, how inarticulate about our desires.

SEVERAL YEARS AGO Diane Johnson called a book about travel *Natural Opium*. For many of the writers in *The Best American Travel Writing 2000*, the drug of choice seems to be a synthetic amphetamine meant to keep the drowsy traveler and reader awake. And this desire for adventure as stimulant takes a grimmer and more political form in Patrick Symmes's "From the Wonderful People Who Brought You the Killing Fields," which describes the author's road trip from Phnom Penh to Pailin, a remote town that was once a Khmer Rouge stronghold. Symmes sets up the piece in classic travel-account style, complete with a venturesome sidekick who will lead him through the wilds of Cambodia; in this case the sidekick is not a native guide but a man with the unlikely name of Wink Dulles ("a dead ringer for Mel Gibson"), who wrote the chapter on Cambodia for *The World's Most Dangerous Places*. (Facing such a prospect, most people would catch the first flight out of Phnom Penh—but that, after all, is Symmes's point.)

Symmes records that the motives for his trip were a mixture of reportorial responsibility and braggadocio: "I felt a journalistic obligation to take the pulse of a nation unexpectedly emerging from its grave, but I also wanted a thrill; I wanted to see some ragged edge of life, to glimpse the Southeast Asia behind the headlines. To many Western travelers like me, the allure of danger zones is undeniable." The resulting piece is jauntily written, full of well-selected descriptions and episodes; but it is far more about the author satisfying his need for thrills than about a nation trying to resurrect itself. It is not remotely an example of serious foreign reportage.

It takes a particular sort of individual to journey to a scene of radical evil and to write about himself. Clearly this kind of travel writing, like so many memoirs in recent years, is more self-serving in its therapeutic purposes than illuminating about its subject. Symmes admits as much in his closing sentence: "We trouble tourists and samplers of disaster are neither vultures nor fools but both in equal measure." But his admission is itself a measure of his complacence.

Travel through politically torn nations can yield great writing, as Rebecca West showed sixty years ago in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*. More recently, Robert D. Kaplan has made a career of traversing the political disasters of our time and writing tendentious books about geopolitics disguised as carefully observed books about travel. A more thoughtful and nuanced example of intellectually responsible travel writing of this kind is the analysis that Neal Ascherson produced in *Black Sea* (1995). With its reserved understatement, Ascherson's book demonstrates how much can be seen and taught by the traveler who keeps his eyes open, stays close to the ground, and lets the adventure find him.

THE PERILS OF using travel as a stimulant are brilliantly, if perhaps inadvertently, exposed in another essay in *The Best American Travel Writing 2000*. In his introduction to the volume, Bill Bryson calls Mark Ross's "The Last Safari" "one of the most harrowing reports you will read this year," but he adds that it "isn't strictly travel writing at all." Bryson is right that it is harrowing, and wrong that it is not travel writing. "The Last Safari" is the dark side of all the macho adventure writing that appears in *The Best American Travel Writing 2000*: the personal document that deconstructs the thrill-seeking and leaves one feeling that travel is finally as much about discovering the limits of the world as it is about testing one's nerve in parts unknown.

Ross tells the story of a group of Western tourists in Uganda, on an expedition to see "a rare breed of mountain gorilla found only in this part of Africa," who made headlines in 1999 when they were captured by rebel guerrillas and marched toward Congo (those who were not killed outright, that is). Ross was the guide for these eco-tourists, and he tells the story of their capture and their eventual release by the guerrillas in a tight diaristic style that makes conventional adventure writing seem either overblown or just plain dull. He is grateful that he survived the raid, but he also recognizes that he witnessed over those few days the end of a way of life in Africa that he had known and loved for years. As he writes, "I came to Africa for the adventure, but before long it became my home."

The realization that Ross comes to, late in the game, is that home is not a place of innocent adventure. Home, in this instance, is where one cannot escape the destruction of politics and war. It is impossible to read "The Last Safari" without a growing sense that today we are suddenly re-learning what travelers knew very well two hundred years ago: that the world—the human world, if not the natural world—is a dangerous place that does not respect travelers. All that has changed is that we now get to places of danger faster than did Mungo Park.

The Best American Travel Writing 2000 has other pieces of a more conventional sort that deserve praise. Isabel Hilton's essay on the search for the new Panchen Lama is a classic piece of foreign reportage that tells us more about the politics of religion in Tibet than do any number of wide-eyed travel pieces or New Age celebrations of the place. Ryszard Kapuścinski's "The Truck" narrates a moment of fear in the Sahara: will the driver be able to fix the truck and get the author and himself out of the middle of nowhere before their water runs out and they die? Here the brevity of the piece adds to its power: it reads like a long nightmare, but it occupies only seven pages. Set against Hilton and Kapuścinski's articles, the two pieces of gourmet tourism, by Clive Irving ("The First Drink of the Day") and David Lansing ("Confessions of a Cheese Smuggler"), seem less than slight, an unfair comparison but one that is inevitable with this sort of anthology.

Paradoxically—or so it would seem—a couple of the most forceful articles in *The Best American Travel Writing 2000* do not follow what I identified earlier as the editor's principle of selection: that the genre seems open to any piece of writing involving movement or transit from one place to another. David Halberstam's "Nantucket on My Mind" and Amy Wilentz's "Marseille's Moment" are two very different portraits of place: his is a loving evocation of an island that he has known for years with family and friends, hers is a photograph of one of the legendarily tough harbors of the Mediterranean. After reading them, one recognizes that there is a kind of travel writing that is not about thrills, but about the infinitely difficult work of knowing a place, of giving oneself over to its historical and physical presence. Perhaps it helps that neither Nantucket nor Marseille is "exotic," because without the drug of the exotic these writers have to describe a place in its actuality, its contradictions, its hold over the imagination.

Writing about familiar places means that the writer cannot get by simply on descriptions of the marvelous and slightly frightening, of places that offer a mild *frisson* and provoke the envy of others. At its most extreme, as in bad science fiction, the writerly taste for the exotic is a literary disaster because it tries too hard and ends in the banal. That writers such as Halberstam and Wilentz work from long experience of a place also helps, because they do not offer a quick take: the quick take, after all, is the obvious reason that writers may find a place exotic. Reading them, one feels an abnegation of self in favor of place. It may well be a trick on the writers' part, of course, but it is a welcome trick.

Reading *The Best American Travel Writing 2000*, one observes that the genre rarely flourishes in the short piece, the snapshot of ten pages or fewer. There

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is something rambling and discursive to travel writing at its most engaging, a pace and a scale that match the rhythms of the journey itself. Reading the finest pieces in this book makes you appreciate that many of the most memorable travel books are long; you must give your mind to them for days and weeks and even months. After all, one of the essential conditions of travel—of all genuine experience—is time.

III.

LARZER ZIFF SETS out to outline the history of American travel writing from its beginning, in John Ledyard's *A Journal of Captain Cook's Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean and in Quest of a North-West Passage*, which appeared in 1783, through its flourishing in Henry James's *The American Scene*, which appeared in 1907. Between Cook and James, in Ziff's illuminating book, come the lives and the careers of three other travel writers: John Lloyd Stephens, Bayard Taylor, and Mark Twain. Twain, of course, is the most likely to be known today for his travel writing. His *Innocents Abroad* and *Roughing It* can be read as a balancing act of Europe and America in ways that become, for Ziff, the latent and abiding theme of all these writers.

This theme finds its most explicit expression in the work of Bayard Taylor, a poor Pennsylvanian whose *Views A-foot*, which appeared in 1846, taught Americans that they did not have to be wealthy to go on the Grand Tour. His writing set loose a flood of American tourists traveling on the cheap that has yet to cease. All of us who went through Europe in the late 1960s with a backpack and a $5-a-day guidebook were Taylor's belated children. In resurrecting him, Ziff makes a major contribution to our understanding of American travel writing, though he cannot decide whether he thinks that Taylor was a competent writer or a hack: "The ever more exotic locale and the ever more unusual means of reaching it were to become the stock-in-trade of the professional travel writers who came after Taylor. He had, in effect, founded the profession. He also hated it." For these same reasons, I suspect, he would have acknowledged his indirect responsibility for much of the contents of *The Best American Travel Writing 2000*.

If Taylor offered his readers tips on how to travel cheaply—avoid commercial inns, drink the local wine, carry a knife and fork—he also could write a fine and vivid prose. Ziff quotes some splendid examples from *Views A-foot*, but none matches his choice of a passage about the Arctic from Taylor's *Northern Travel*, published eleven years later:

> It was a wonderful, a fairy world we beheld—too beautiful to be lifeless, but every face we met reminded us the more that this was the chill beauty of Death—of dead Nature. Death was in the sparkling air, in the jewelled trees, in the spotless snow. Take off your mitten, and his hand will grasp yours like a vice; uncover your mouth, and your frozen lips will soon acknowledge his kiss.

In evoking the erotic appeal of icy death, this passage says more about the lure of rough travel than most practitioners of the trade would feel comfortable admitting in print. As Ziff shows, a man who today might write for the Lonely Planet or the Rough Guide series could also have a sense of the sublime that reminds us why we travel, on the cheap or not.

JOHN LLOYD STEPHENS began his career in the late 1830s with accounts of travel in the Middle East and Europe: *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land* (1837) and *Incidents of Travel in Greece, Turkey, Russia, and Poland* (1838). Within a few years he went on to produce, in an astonishing burst of energy, two further books that established his reputation and make him a plausible candidate to be considered, in Ziff's opinion, the finest travel writer ever produced by the United States. Knowing a clever merchandising method when he saw one, Stephens titled these books *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, & Yucatan* (1841) and *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* (1843).

These later books record far more than a traveler's impressions of the colorful and exotic. Instead they narrate Stephens's astonishingly imaginative recovery of the classic civilizations of Central America. American tourists in Cancún in our own time owe their day trips to Mayan pyramids to Stephens, for he was the first to recognize that those strangely shaped hills in the jungle were in fact the overgrown remains of a lost world. Stephens's *Incidents* books remain highly readable today, especially the last two.

Stephens was clearly a great showman and promoter of the lost world of the Mayans. Yet there is also something wonderfully bracing in his desire to find—and also in his success at doing so—an ancient heritage for the Americas that could stand unashamedly beside the glamorous provenances of Egypt and Greece. This cultural archeology was perhaps not quite what Emerson had in mind when, in 1837, he called in "The American Scholar" for his fellow countrymen to renounce "the courtly muses of Europe," but it proceeded from the same impulse: to find an identity and a history that would emancipate Americans from their thralldom to Europe.

MARK TWAIN'S SOLUTION to that problem was to travel to Europe in the guise of an unashamed hayseed rather than as the usual well-read and reverential visitor. He would be a kind of representative American who brought to Europe a "show me" attitude regarding the sights approved by officious guidebooks. "This outlook led him to two bold, not to say outrageous, commitments," Ziff observes. "He would ignore sites that bored him, regardless of how famous they might be; and he would pit his opinions against the standing truths, however uncouth this might reveal him to be." Travel was valuable not because it gave tourists knowledge of sites to be accumulated and bragged about like trophies, but rather because it allowed them some measure of self-knowledge through what Ziff calls the fun of unlearning "sham beliefs." As a travel writer, Mark Twain is a teller of long tales, who works best through the slow accumulation of details and voices rather than through the sharp observation or the memorable phrase. As a result, his travel writing is best quoted at length or not at all. This reading of Twain the traveler aligns him with Twain the novelist, especially the creator of the Huck Finn who decides to go to hell rather than turn Jim in to the authorities. As the comparison suggests, one need not go to Europe to lose sham beliefs; one simply has to leave home.

Twain's desire to see things for himself as a traveler also had consequences, in Ziff's trenchant reading, for his narrative technique as a travel writer—what Ziff calls Twain's "artful pursuit of associations." He traces this technique through *Roughing It* in ways that show Twain skillfully setting his stories in relation to each other to suggest some larger coherence in his view of the American West in its boom years. In 1897, twenty-five years after writing about life in the little mining towns of Nevada, Twain would go to the other extreme and compose *Following the Equator*, a book that took on the world as a whole, or at least the English-speaking parts of it. In this book, especially in its sections on India, Twain found his last moment of transcendence and kinship with other peoples of the world. That tension between the homeland of America and the foreignness of parts abroad allowed him to make travel writing into something more than an occasion for spinning humorous yarns and playing the clever rube.

This same tension, of course, drove Henry James throughout his career as

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both a novelist and a travel writer. *The American Scene* is the book that earns James a place among the great travel writers, for it is impossible to imagine anyone else writing it. Certainly none of the other four writers in Ziff's pantheon had the gifts of introspection and precise observation required to write such a book. *The American Scene* registers its author's historical and cultural predicament with the finest exactitude; it offers its tentative and measured style as a criticism of an America teeming with newness and on the verge of becoming a world power; and it depicts the past of James's youth beneath its portrayal of episodes from the present like the pentimento of a canvas. For the aficionado of adventure travel, the book would be (I suppose) one long snooze from start to finish, since its author never leaves the harbor of the known and the civilized. But that same reader would probably wonder what species James was after in *The Beast in the Jungle*.

Ziff finds *The American Scene* to be the best of James's travel books, because it elicited from him "a consistently high level of analysis in justification of his convictions." I take this to mean that James did more than describe; rather, he described to a purpose, just as he did in the best of his novels. If his other travel books are wonderful entertainments, *The American Scene* is more ambitious in its desire to hold in suspension two moments of American life through the consciousness of a single writer who had known them both as a native son and as a returning expatriate. James managed to play both roles by casting himself as the traveler who could register the signs and the changes that had escaped the observation of resident Americans. In this way, *The American Scene* is reminiscent of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*.

Ziff fails to make this comparison, insisting throughout *Return Passages* on reading American travel writers in a kind of nationalist isolation. Ledyard, Stephens, Taylor, Twain, and James seem carefully chosen to illustrate a thesis, though Ziff does not articulate it forcefully: that American travel writing into the early twentieth century can be divided into three self-contained stages. It begins with writing about the explorations of exotic regions in the South Pacific, Africa, Siberia, and Central America conducted at a time when the United States was itself exotic because it was largely unfamiliar to Europeans (Ledyard and Stephens); and then it turns to Europe as the United States became increasingly settled and confident of its own cultural identity (Taylor and Twain); and finally it makes a return passage to the United States with a masterpiece by the expatriate scion of one of the country's leading families (James). Along the way Ziff examines other American writers in passing, but his argument rests firmly on these five authors.

In its choice of writers to survey, Ziff's book is very much an argument about American culture as seen through the lens of travel writing. Non-American travel writers receive little if any attention, even those—Dickens, Fanny Trollope, Tocqueville—who wrote brilliantly about the United States. Indeed, Ziff casts Ledyard and James as the framing figures of his tradition to capture a lovely set of ironies. Ledyard, born in Connecticut, traveled the Pacific in the British Navy under Captain Cook before the United States came into existence as a political state; but he can be claimed retrospectively as an expatriate traveler because in the 1780s he corresponded regularly with Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine while he planned a trip to Russia and Siberia. At the other extreme, the expatriate James returned to the United States to view a country that seemed almost unrecognizable from the one he had left as a young man in the early 1870s; and at that moment of return he wrote his most complexly American work and then sailed back to England, where he died in 1916 as a British subject.

As he moves from the explorer's journal of initial encounter to the cosmopolite's meditation on delayed return, Ziff argues also for the centrality of travel writing in nineteenth-century American culture. The sales figures for travel books and the frequency with which travel narratives appeared in or were reviewed by journals bear out Ziff's assertion that only religious texts were more likely to be read during the period. This would also explain why *Pilgrim's Progress* was likely to be one of the few books other than the Bible found in the average American household: its allegory of the religious life as a journey, a trip, left a deep impression on American culture and literature.

Ziff has little interest in examining the relation of American travel writers to writers from elsewhere, be they writers of allegory, travel, or fiction. There is more than a hint of American exceptionalism in his vision of Ledyard, Stephens, Taylor, Twain, and James. That travel writers express a national style may well be true: Charles Doughty seems as British as André Gide seems French. From a loose characterization of national identity, however, it seems a large and implausible step to claim, with Ziff, that "for a European, African, Asian, travel abroad is travel away from home, but for an American it is also travel toward it." This claim refers to our nation's history of immigration, as if that factor determined the experience of American travelers and only of American travelers. Since Ziff never discusses any European or African or Asian traveler in his book, he seems here simply to be pressing a case for the exceptionalism of American writers that renders them less interesting than they would be if placed in an international context.

Ziff's variety of literary isolationism seems particularly misconceived considering the nature of travel literature. Surely this is the genre least respectful of national boundaries. Just as those who write travel books cross borders, so, too, do their books reach a trans-national audience. One might go a step further and suggest that Americans in the nineteenth century were far more likely to be familiar with Dickens and Mrs. Trollope than with Ledyard or Stephens, for it was the British writers who had made themselves notorious by making uncomplimentary remarks about the American Eden. And there is another reason to place these five American writers, as well as such compatriots as Washington Irving and Herman Melville, in the company of European travel writers: they all circulated in the larger world.

The sad end of John Ledyard complicates the story told in *Return Passages* about the Americanness of American travel writers. After sailing with Captain Cook in the Pacific as he searched for a northwest passage to facilitate trade, crossing Russia and most of Siberia in the hope of opening the region to European and American commercial interests, Ledyard turned his sights toward Africa as the next economic and colonial target of opportunity. Drawing on his friendship with Sir Joseph Banks, Ledyard swung a commission to travel to Egypt in the service of the African Association. His charge was to depart from Cairo and "traverse the Continent of Africa, as nearly as possible in the direction of the Niger ... and that he shall return to Britain by way of any of the European settlements on the Western Coast." Ledyard never left Cairo, dying there in 1789 at the age of thirty-nine. Six years later, the African Association sent Mungo Park to the coast of West Africa, where he began his journey to track the Niger. Park, in that way at least, completed the story of Ledyard's life. Casting Ledyard as the forerunner to Park does not diminish his stature; it simply suggests that his identity as a traveler and as a writer should not be confined within national borders or traditions.

Despite this Americanist emphasis, Ziff has written a shrewd and learned study. Reading these five Americans, even in the brief quotations offered by Ziff, reminds us that travel writing on an expansive

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scale—even an epic scale—was very much a part of nineteenth-century culture. We can place these five Americans in the company of Dickens, Thackeray, Stendhal, and the Trollopes as masters of travel writing who knew that the genre was about passages outward and homebound, about wondering where one lived on a planet that could no longer be understood within the terms of a divine cosmology. Traversing the world without a map of God's creation became their form of adventure.

IV.

By ending with Henry James, Ziff is free to evade the rather depressing question of how American travel writing has fared in subsequent years. While the genre has flourished in Britain, attracting professional travel writers (Wilfred Thesiger, Jan Morris, Eric Newby) as well as poets and novelists on the loose (Lawrence, Auden, Graham Greene, Elizabeth Bowen), the story in the United States seems very different. A few fine American writers have written travel books (Mary McCarthy, Edmund Wilson, Saul Bellow), but none can be classed as the equal of Mark Twain or Henry James—or Thoreau or Henry Adams, each of whom might have had a chapter in Ziff's book. The place that great American writers of this century wrote about when they did write about place was most likely to be home. Why travel if you are "sole owner and proprietor" of Yoknapatawpha County?

When American writers such as McCarthy or Wilson or Bellow turned to Europe or the Middle East, they wrote travel books that were not so much conventional accounts of notable features and adventures as they were surrogates for the literary or political essay. As Paul Fussell observed in *Abroad*, travel writing can be a way of ruminating on personal experience and history and beauty and other topics that might seem precious in other literary contexts. But if a travel writer has no patience for ruminating about such topics, what happens to the genre? What use, other than serving as exploraporn, can it have? And if travel writers have little interest in thinking hard about their experience in the places they visit, then what happens to the genre? Is it all just the quick take, the swift visit in search of publishable copy?

On the last page of *The Kingdom by the Sea*, the record of his circumambulation of Britain, Paul Theroux makes a revealing statement. "I felt I knew the world much better for having seen Britain—and I knew Britain so well and had been in its pockets so long I felt impatient to leave; I had my usual bad dream that I would be forced to stay longer." That this frequent traveler should suffer a recurrent nightmare of being stuck in one place may be psychologically plausible, but it also says a great deal about his narrative practice as a writer.

With his first book in the genre, the enormously popular *The Great Railway Bazaar* (1975), Theroux made his reputation as the master of the pre-mapped trip, with an itinerary determined by unalterable circumstances such as the curve of a coastline or the route of a train. In addition to the circular itinerary from London to Asia and back again, he has completed, among others: the straight-line train trip (as far as possible) from Medford, Massachusetts to Esquel, Argentina (*The Old Patagonian Express*); and a walk around the entire coast of Britain (*The Kingdom by the Sea*); and the train routes through China (*Riding the Iron Rooster*); and a circumnavigation of the Mediterranean (*The Pillars of Hercules*).

Theroux is not a wanderer, quick to follow a detour or an impulse. He has no genius for getting lost. He plans his route and then stays with it in an orderly manner. In his typical account he writes the sequence of his journey, stopping to relate incidents and conversations along the way, but strictly in the order that he claims to have experienced them. He rarely manipulates the flow of time; his narrative moves forward with the same unswerving if sometimes fitful progress as the trains that he loves so unwaveringly. Theroux is also not much given to retrospection or rumination. It is the current moment of the journey that engages his attention as a writer. Thus he provides descriptions of timetables, menus, sleeping compartments, ferry routes, the clothes he wears, the books he reads. He remarks revealingly that the chief flaw of Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia* is its lack of a factual narrative, the absence of an explanation of how Chatwin actually got from point to point. One is never in any such doubt when reading Theroux; it is easy to follow exactly in his footsteps if one has a good map.

The long and detailed conversations that fill Theroux's travel books suggest that he either has extraordinary recall or is a compulsive notetaker. From comments scattered throughout *Fresh Air Fiend*, the truth would seem to be both. One gets the sense that he drafts his books as he journeys: a few days of travel, a few days of writing, and so on until he reaches his destination. His accounts often have the feel of mechanically transcribed experience: they constitute a streaming video of all that he sees and talks about and eats and enjoys and likes and dislikes. If this style creates a sense of immediacy, it also is responsible for a lack of reflection about his experience. Theroux perceives rather than recollects; he seldom breaks the flow of his account to digress into memory or fantasy or comparisons with elsewhere. He will often tell us what he is reading, but only as he tells us what he is drinking. He is an oddly thoughtless traveler.

Theroux also defines his particular style as a traveler by playing the anti-tourist. He expresses little interest in the history of the places through which he travels, and even less interest in their famous sights. The momentary experience is what matters for him: the last conversation or unpleasant person he has met, the last meal, the last irritation. Focusing on the immediate would make any traveler grouchy, grumpy, even surly: things get said in the confusions of travel that are best left behind or forgotten. But annoyances fade in retrospect, if one lets them, and the traveler's mantra should be: forget the miseries, remember the pleasures. Unless, that is, you are Theroux, and relish writing out the nuisances detail for detail. (He does deserve the credit that he claims in *Fresh Air Fiend* for never describing his bouts of diarrhea.) One remembers why, after finishing Tobias Smollett's acerbic *Travels Through France and Italy* (1766), Laurence Sterne nicknamed him "Smelfungus."

Certainly Theroux has moments when he is a Smelfungus. Here is his description, in *The Kingdom by the Sea*, of the inexpensive tourist camps favored by British workers on the dole: "Sleeping until noon, not having to cook or mind children, and being a few steps away from the chippy, the bar and the betting shop: it was a sleazy paradise in which people were treated more or less like animals in a zoo." But he never seems to ask why these people might be enjoying themselves in this "sleazy paradise." And there is a passage from *The Pillars of Hercules* that would certainly win Theroux entry into the most exclusive club of travel snobs: "The whole of Greece seemed to me a cut-price theme park of broken marble, a place where you were harangued in a high-minded way about Ancient Greek culture while some swarthy little person picked your pocket. That, and unlimited Turkophobia."

Whether such passages are accurate reportage can be argued endlessly. What they reveal of Theroux as a travel writer seems less arguable: that he likes the quick take, the sweeping generalization that fells an entire country and makes his readers feel he is tough-minded and unsparing. One would never say of him,

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as Twain said of a contemporary travel writer, that "the man has got the panegyrics." And these quick takes and generalizations are likely to make readers feel that they are probably better off for not following in the writer's footsteps. Reading Theroux almost always makes me glad to be at home, with all its familiarities and comforts. He is the perfect travel writer for people who do not really want to leave home, but who do want to be told with verve and style how unpleasant foreign parts can be.

IN *FRESH AIR FIEND*, though, Theroux is a much mellower character than he is in his travel narratives. This book, a collection of his miscellaneous writing since 1985, offers a wide variety of pieces: some earnest and rather dull examples of political reportage from mainland China; rhapsodic accounts of kayak journeys taken as a break from the routine of writing (hence the title of the book); readable introductions to or reviews of books by Defoe, Conrad, Graham Greene, Apsley Cherry-Garrard, Thoreau, and Chatwin (who does feel the sting of Theroux's pen); rosy accounts of travel in Hawaii and the Pacific Islands; and various other writing done along the way. His tone seems far more gentle here, as when he resists outright mockery of wealthy, bored Americans on a Lindblad tourboat going down the Yangtze. Anyone who remembers his sketches of similar American tourists on a Mediterranean cruise in *The Pillars of Hercules* knows how gently he treats the group in "Down the Yangtze." Perhaps it was the luxury of the Lindblad accommodations, perhaps his distaste for Red China; but whatever it was that distracted him from the inanities of his fellow Americans, he sounds a bit like the amiable author of *Innocents Abroad*.

Among the pieces collected in this book is perhaps the finest twenty pages or so that Theroux has ever written: an account of a trip down the Zambezi River commissioned by *National Geographic*. Here the fixed route seems natural rather than imposed, because the story as he gently tells it of life along the Zambezi flows with the current of the great river. There are many pleasures here: "Otters plunged, looking sleek, some playing, others clearly chasing fish. And all over the fourteen cataracts of Ngonye, in the rising mists in this broad complex of red cliffs and frothy pools, birds flitted." Or here, in a passage that will surprise the reader who remembers Theroux's usual distrust of the local water: "I drank the river too. Though I was hesitant at first, only wetting my lips or sipping it, I eventually developed a taste for it on my long trip downriver." After passages such as these, Theroux earns his lush, almost lyrical conclusion: "The Africans have always seen the Zambezi as a river of mythic power, something lovely that was also a vital force, endlessly pouring from the heart of Africa."

The miscellaneous pieces in the book gain a certain sense of unity from Theroux's persistent attempt to capture the meaning of travel and travel writing. Here are only a few of his pronouncements:

> The job of the travel writer is to go far and wide, make voluminous notes, and tell the truth.

> Traveling hopefully into the unknown with a little information: dead reckoning is the way most people live their lives, and the phrase itself seems to sum up human existence.

> The profoundest satisfaction in travel is a sense of discovery, the private thrill of seeing something new or seeing it in a new way. This is unquestionably egotistical, but such discoveries do not come easy.

> Who are the great travelers? They are curious, contented, self-sufficient people who are not afraid of the past. They are not hiding in travel; they are seeking.

True or untrue, these are all noble if self-regarding claims. Whether any travel writer can live up to them seems doubtful. Whether any should try to do so seems even more doubtful. I would rather that the travel writer have a sharp eye, a sense of the past, an empathetic spirit, and a stubborn conviction that going back to places is likely to yield more insight than the first pass through on a quick assignment.

As every spot on earth gets written up, and every "last place" gets discovered, travel writing as a genre seems to have run its course. And yet the genre has been remarkably resilient over the centuries. After the great explorers proved that there were no monsters in Patagonia or Abyssinia, after naturalists surveyed the flora and fauna of regions hitherto unknown to Europeans, travel writers had to stop lying about places they had never been to personally. They started making discoveries about ancient sites, beautiful landscapes, the customs of people abroad. The experience of travel itself became a subject. Then scholars started to write books about travel books, and the genre came to seem yet again on the edge of exhaustion.

Writers will continue to tell tales about adventure travel, just as it will remain a form of conspicuous consumption in

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American society. Perhaps another kind of travel writing will emerge, an adventure genre that gives up the myth of looking for unwritten places and instead struggles to look again at what they already inhabit, to see the exotic in the familiar places of our lives. For all the recent books about climbing and dying on Mount Everest, it is striking how few memorable traveler's tales we have about wandering around New York City. And perhaps even more daring, some travel writer may be valiant and imaginative enough to wander exigently through tourist traps and resorts and all the spoiled places of the earth, and show us how we travel now. ■

Gory Days

By DAVID A. BELL

Glory and Terror: Seven Deaths Under the French Revolution by Antoine de Baecque translated by Charlotte Mandell

(Routledge, 203 pp., $35)

ON SEPTEMBER 3, 1792, the Princesse de Lamballe, a favorite of Queen Marie Antoinette and a prisoner of the new French Republic, was dragged from her jail cell and murdered by an angry revolutionary mob. Her head was cut off and stuck on the end of a pike, but the mob remained unsated. They tore the clothes off the princess's body, then cut off her limbs and breasts, mutilated her genitals, pulled out her heart, and tasted her blood. They paraded through Paris, one man carrying her head, a second holding her heart and a length of her intestines, others dragging the remains of her torso over the cobblestones with a rope. Finally they came to the prison holding the royal family, and demanded that Marie Antoinette come to the window. The queen fainted at the hideous sight. At some point, the princess's heart was roasted on a spit and eaten.

Actually, most of this story is probably false. The Princesse de Lamballe was indeed murdered and her head carried through Paris, as happened with many other victims of French revolutionary violence. But there is no credible evidence for the gruesome mutilation of the corpse, the drinking of the blood, the roasting of the heart, the dragging of the torso. These stories come from later descriptions of the September prison massacres (in which as many as fourteen hundred people perished) written by authors who sought to exaggerate the horrors of an already unbelievably horrific episode. As a result, most credible historians have paid them little attention. Yet such stories have a historical importance and interest of their own, because they were widely disseminated and widely believed at the time. Owing to their popularity, to their career as cultural facts, these legends deserve historical analysis; and Antoine de Baecque has provided it in a brilliant and fascinating book in which he examines the stories, true and false, that circulated around seven memorable deaths in the French Revolution.

De Baecque is the sort of Frenchman that American intellectuals used to unquestioningly admire, and now more often unquestioningly disdain. For a start, he is suspiciously prolific, having published more than fifteen books before turning forty, and on the very different subjects of the French Revolution and the cinema. (He is best known in the United States for a biography of François Truffaut, coauthored with Serge Toubiana, which appeared here in 1999.) Trained as a Marxist, he is now resolutely avant-garde, embracing postmodernism as self-evident and casting aside traditional notions of historical causality with relish. He can write in the sort of slippery French abstractions that are often mistaken for profundities. He also has an enviable public visibility, having edited the *Cahiers du cinéma*, and he has recently been named to head the new Museum of the Audio-Visual, all while holding a professorship at the Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines. If he ever gains a large readership in the United States, he will almost certainly be denounced by American conservatives as yet another French threat to Western civilization.

Yet de Baecque's indisputable trendiness should not obscure the fact that he is one of the most original and interesting historians in France. His work on the cinema, rather than distracting him from the Revolution, has in fact provided him with a genuinely new way of writing about it. De Baecque has established himself as a consummate historian of political imagery: of the way in which particular images—such as the alleged defilement of the Princesse de Lamballe's body—scorch themselves onto the thoughts and the emotions of a political community, and thereby become political facts in their own right, shaping reactions and decisions. In his prose (in the original French, at least) de Baecque re-creates these images with startling intensity. He then examines them with the eye of a skilled literary critic, picking them apart to explain the sources of their often macabre power.

The French Revolution offers historians one of the densest and most vivid quarries of such imagery in modern history: the Bastille and its fall; Marat dead in his bathtub; King Louis XVI arrested at Varennes; Robespierre descending from his huge plaster Sinai during the Festival of the Supreme Being; and the guillotine, the guillotine, the guillotine. This density is precisely what has made the Revolution so attractive to film-makers from Abel Gance and Jean Renoir to Andrzej Wajda, as well as to pyrotechnic writers from Thomas Carlyle to Simon Schama. More than fifty years before the invention of moving pictures, Carlyle laid out his astonishing *The French Revolution* as a series of phantasmagoric, brilliantly colored tableaux, repeatedly exhorting his reader to "behold!... behold!... behold!" But all this chilling imagery is also a mixed blessing for the historian. It is just too affecting, too unforgettable: how can a historian master so many images of such force, and submit them to a rigorous analysis, and weave them into an original pattern?

IRONICALLY, DESPITE THE intensely visual nature of these images, the Revolution did not express itself most vividly in the visual arts. (There were exceptions, of course, such as Jacques-Louis David's great portrait of Marat's death.) It was, rather, a great tempest of words, in pamphlets, newspapers, and speeches, and the images that de Baecque discusses are above all verbal descriptions taken from these sources. Significantly, while he began his career with a study of revolutionary caricatures, perhaps owing to their affinity with film, he quickly expanded into the much richer field of

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Egypt is one of only two countries (the other is Jordan) with which Israel has formal peace agreements. Egypt is the largest and most important country in the Arab world. Its influence and support in bringing the current upheaval of the Palestinians to an end would be of greatest value. But does Egypt play any role at all as peacekeeper? And is the peace with Egypt an encouraging example for Israel as to what to expect in any possible peace with the Palestinians?

What are the facts?

Peace with Egypt is the coldest possible. For its agreement to make true peace with Israel, Egypt received the huge Sinai Peninsula in which Israel had invested over $10 billion. It had created flourishing cities, some of the most advanced military and naval installations in the world, and had developed oil fields that would have made it energy independent for the foreseeable future. Without firing a shot, Egypt received all of this, plus generous grants from the United States -- over $50 billion to date. What Egypt gave in return was a piece of paper. And even that was hedged. It would allow Egypt to join in an "Arab War" against Israel. The peace between Israel and Egypt, which the Israelis had envisioned to be like the peace between Germany and France, turned out, unfortunately, to be the "coldest peace" possible. It is less of a peace than a de facto state of non-belligerence. The Israeli ambassador in Cairo is totally isolated and blacklisted and does not participate in any official functions of the Egyptian government. There is practically no trade between the two countries and no cultural exchange. The public sector of Egypt, which constitutes 80% of the total economy, is forbidden to do business with Israel. Private enterprises are actively discouraged and often threatened when they try to become engaged with Israeli firms in any way. Israeli firms are barred from submitting tenders for local projects for "security reasons" and they are not allowed to participate in trade fairs. Although quite a few Israelis visit Egypt, hardly any Egyptians go to Israel, since those who do wish to visit are summoned to the security police for severe harassment and lengthy interrogation.

> "Israel's government must be commended for proceeding with the greatest caution in its dealings with the Arabs, and especially in any possible peace negotiations with the Palestinians."

Not forthcoming on diplomatic front. More Israelis have been killed in Egypt or on the Egyptian border than even on the Syrian border. Egyptian media, including the official press, are full of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish venom, preaching hatred and prejudice. There have been numerous instances of "crazed" Egyptian soldiers shooting up Israeli buses traveling along the border highways, to the general applause of the media. In one especially gruesome instance, an Egyptian police officer machine-gunned seven Israeli tourists, who had inadvertently ventured into Egyptian territory; his colleagues stood around preventing medical help from reaching the victims, all of whom bled to death. Among the seven were four children. The media hailed the killer as a national hero.

On the diplomatic front, the Egyptians aren't any more forthcoming. Egypt spearheaded the campaign to keep the "Zionism is racism" resolution alive in the U.N. When it was finally repealed, Egypt walked out. Egypt also exerted and still exerts much effort to prevent African countries from establishing or renewing diplomatic relations with Israel. Egyptian diplomats, including Butros-Butros Ghali, former secretary general of the United Nations, lobbied fervently against the loan guarantees that Israel needed in order to absorb and settle the hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees, who had already arrived and are still arriving, from the former Soviet Union. Hosni Mubarak, who has been president of Egypt since 1981, has not once deigned to set foot in Jerusalem, nor has he made any other friendly gesture towards Israel in those twenty years.

Egypt is armed to the teeth with the most advanced weapons in the world -- most of which (sad to say) have been provided by the United States. Egypt is not being threatened by any of its neighbors -- and that includes Israel, whose fervent desire is to live in peace with the Arab world. The enormous accumulation of weaponry by Egypt is for one purpose only -- namely to be able to strike at Israel when the occasion is deemed to be propitious. The only saving grace is that, contrary to the situation on Israel's northern and eastern fronts, the vast Sinai, which serves as a buffer zone, is provided with early warning systems and Israel is therefore not subject to surprise attack. But if the peace with Egypt is any example of what could be expected from a peace with the Palestinians (if such a thing could ever be brought about), it is certainly most discouraging. Peace can come to the area only if and when Egypt and the other Arab countries truly accept Israel as part of the Middle East. Israel's government must be commended for proceeding with the greatest caution in its dealings with the Arabs, and especially in any possible peace negotiations with the Palestinians.

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revolutionary prose, first in a study of "corporeal metaphor" titled *The Body Politic*, which was published in 1993, and now in *Glory and Terror*. In these works, de Baecque has emerged as his generation's great student of French revolutionary language.

It is not enough to say that the Revolution generated its profusion of dramatic imagery simply because it was an inherently dramatic event. The revolutionaries actively sought to stage dramatic scenes, and to commemorate, to dramatize, and to embroider the ones that they had already played out. Younger historians of eighteenth-century France such as Paul Friedland and Joseph Zizek have recently underlined the extent to which revolutionary actors obsessively imagined themselves as protagonists in epic stage plays, figures in grand history paintings, or the subjects of history books as yet unwritten.

On June 20, 1789, when the deputies to the new, revolutionary National Assembly, fearing a royal coup d'état, met in a tennis court and swore an oath not to dissolve until they had given France a new constitution, they held up their arms in a Roman salute, in conscious echo of David's great painting *Oath of the Horatii*. David in turn immortalized the scene in his unfinished tableau *Oath of the Tennis Court*. In the midst of desperate civil war and the virtual collapse of civic order, moreover, the legislators of the Terror spent vast amounts of time and energy designing their own costumes and official symbols, and in organizing large-scale, intricately choreographed civic festivals. It was as if every gesture had to demonstrate the Revolution's complete and permanent break with the past. The French, claimed Robespierre, had leaped two thousand years ahead of the rest of the human race, so that "one is tempted to see them as a different species."

Above all, the revolutionaries had an unslakable need for ritual: parades, processions, oath-takings, inaugurations, inquests, trials, funerals, executions. When Charlotte Corday stabbed to death the venomous demagogue Marat in the summer of 1793, the radical Cordelier Club staged wild funerary rites in which Marat's heart was borne through the streets of Paris like a sacred relic, to the chant of "heart of Jesus, heart of Marat." The bathtub in which he met his end was publicly displayed as a sort of bizarre crucifix. The Montmartre district of Paris was renamed Mont-Marat, and David painted his grandiose tableau of the corpse, with its brazen Christ-like accents.

As de Baecque observes, this sort of fixation on a corpse was by no means exceptional during the radical phase of the French Revolution, from 1791 to 1794. Most of this period's important images and rituals involved dead bodies, from Marat to the victims of the guillotine and the prison massacres to the august cadaver of Louis XVI himself, God's anointed and "most Christian" king, thrown into a common grave and covered with quicklime to ensure rapid decomposition and a lack of relics. In the most important revolutionary building project, the lugubrious Neoclassical Church of Saint Genevieve was transformed into an even more lugubrious crypt and monument for "the great men of the *patrie*," the Pantheon.

De Baecque keenly notes that no formal document ever proclaimed the creation of the First French Republic; its founding act was the execution of the king. Rituals and stories proliferated around famous corpses, often competing with one another as contending political factions sought to impose their particular vision of a particular death. They thus came symbolically to embody contending visions of the Revolution itself. "The cadaver . . . ," de Baecque observes, "became the conceptual object which allowed revolutionary politics to be thought out."

In his book de Baecque leaves aside Marat, the best-known and best-studied of the revolutionary corpses, and instead examines seven others, including those of Lamballe, the revolutionary orator Mirabeau, Voltaire (disinterred and re-buried in the Pantheon in 1791), and Louis XVI. He is hardly the first historian to investigate these revolutionary images of death. What makes his work so original, although also somewhat problematic, is his method, which he first developed in *The Body Politic*. Unlike more traditional historians, de Baecque does not relate the texts that he studies to their authors' biographies, or to the situation of a particular social group, or to a broad ideological dynamic, in the manner of François Furet, the late master of revolutionary history. He does not present them as the passive "reflection" of a particular personality, event, structure, or idea. Postmodern theory has unfettered de Baecque from following any approach that would subordinate the texts, in this manner, to a supposedly more "fundamental" context.

His method, instead, is to use long, lavish quotations and paraphrases to recreate images with intensity, and then deftly to take them apart and show how their different elements worked to create a political effect. The best illustration of this method comes in a chapter on the most obscure of de Baecque's seven subjects. In the spring of 1794, an employee in the national lottery attempted to assassinate the radical leader Collot d'Herbois, and in the following confusion shot and dangerously wounded a *sans-culotte* locksmith named Geffroy. While the authorities quickly dispatched the assassin and his accomplices to the guillotine, they established a virtual cult of Geffroy, with speeches, hymns and stage plays written in his praise. Doctors appeared before the National Convention on a daily basis, reporting in the most minute details on the state of Geffroy's "ecchymoses," on the thickness of the scabs of the wounds, on the nature and volume of his "purulent discharges."

As de Baecque demonstrates, Geffroy's body, in its struggle to overcome infection and tissue damage and to "regenerate" itself, became a living metaphor for the body politic, which the revolutionaries similarly described in terms of corruption and regeneration. In a brilliant stroke, de Baecque ties together the medical, political, and theological meanings of the word "regeneration," highlighting the way it recalled for eighteenth-century readers the miracles of Scripture. He shows how Geffroy featured in revolutionary texts as a latter-day Lazarus, brought back from the dead by the redeeming arm of the Revolution itself.

The other chapters do much the same sort of work. In a study of the early revolutionary leader and orator Mirabeau, de Baecque examines the competing stories that arose around his death, which radical critics ascribed to his well-known syphilitic debauches and defenders attributed to overwork in the service of his country. In both cases, the body again emerged as a metaphor for revolutionary politics, and a site for debating the question of how private character relates to public politics—a question that has lost none of its salience over the last two centuries. The horrifying chapter on the Princesse de Lamballe shows how, in the revolutionary imagination, the crimes of the Old Regime were literally inscribed on her body (a procedure redolent of pre-revolutionary justice, as readers of Foucault will remember), and how her blood was seen to wash the French nation clean of counter-revolution. Revolutionaries assigned similar baptismal qualities to the blood of Louis XVI, while counter-revolutionaries sought to memorialize the king's death as a second Crucifixion.

De Baecque's postmodern method has some fairly obvious disadvantages. His book presents its texts as disembodied, impersonal voices. The reader learns little about how stories such as the one about the mutilation of Lamballe's corpse might have arisen, or why so many people appar-

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ently believed them. De Baecque gives very little sense of the nature of revolutionary politics itself: the wild swings from panic to exaltation that could grip whole populations during the great revolutionary episodes, such as the fall of the Bastille, or the sheer confusion and inaccuracies that accompanied them (French revolutionary newspapers often amounted to long catalogues of mistaken information). He also gives little sense of the operation of rumor and innuendo, which were crucial to the generation and the transformation of the stories that the printing press eventually froze into the form in which he found them.

At the same time, de Baecque's insistence on remaining within the revolutionary moment denies his book what was once one of the great qualities of French historiography: a sense of the *longue durée*. Why did the French revolutionaries have such an agonizingly sharp desire to create dramatic tableaux and rituals? De Baecque's evidence, more than his analysis, suggests that one answer is to be found in exploring their relationship to religion. The Revolution occurred at the end of a long century of disenchantment, in which traditional icons and objects of adoration in the church and the state had lost much of their power over France's educated elites.

The *philosophes* of the Enlightenment were acutely aware of this disenchantment, and they eagerly abetted it, engaging in long, earnest debates over what new entities might, in an age of Reason, replace the crucifixes, the crowns, and the scepters of the old order in providing a nation with sources of symbolic unity and common purpose. The revolutionaries—even as they dynamited churches, established a cult of Reason, and threw a royal head once anointed with holy oil into a common grave—sought to establish a new order of the sacred, centered on the figure of the nation, and they rummaged with nervous exaltation through the disordered wreckage of French Christianity as they did so. "Heart of Jesus, Heart of Marat." It is no accident that the images and the stories analyzed by de Baecque are so often, at bottom, images and stories of baptism and redemption, sin and resurrection.

It is the French historian Mona Ozouf who has most successfully explored this revolutionary search for the sacred, in *Festivals and the French Revolution* (1976), a finely nuanced work that engages deeply with Durkheimian sociology. Ozouf concentrates on the Revolution's civic festivals, arguing that they aimed to accomplish a "transfer of sacrality" from the old order to the new, and from heaven to earth. De Baecque builds on her work, but his own book lacks Ozouf's systematic, almost anthropological appreciation of the meanings encoded in rituals, and of the ways in which older cultural elements can be fused into a new pattern.

On the other hand, de Baecque's more impressionistic approach gives his book a vividness and an intensity that is not found in Ozouf, or in earlier treatments of his subject matter. Through his deft use of quotation and paraphrase, and his refusal to diminish the revolutionary stories and images by attributing them to other, "deeper" causes, he immerses his reader in the events themselves. He certainly provides a startlingly visceral sense of how the Revolution's texts operated—how they were actually read.

The history of reading, as Robert Darnton has remarked, remains a mystery in many ways. We have very little direct evidence as to how eighteenth-century readers would have experienced de Baecque's material. Darnton himself has hunted for answers in eighteenth-century French archives, searching for previously unknown letters and manuscripts reporting on the experience. De Baecque's approach is less direct, relying on his literary dissection of the play of meanings and resonances in printed works. And all the obstacles and the obscurities notwithstanding, he brings his own readers a long way toward his goal, which is no mean achievement.

I MUST QUALIFY this last statement, though, because what is true of de Baecque's original French book, which appeared in 1997, is emphatically not true of this awkward and error-ridden translation. Nearly every page of *Glory and Terror* contains a howler, thanks to the translator's evident inability to recognize French idioms and "false friends" (misleading cognates). The French phrase *l'on s'en doutait*, meaning "we suspected as much," here becomes "we doubt it." *L'état des plaies' est dressé*, or "the 'report on the wounds' is drawn up," is turned into the meaningless "the 'state of the wounds' is dressed." A quotation about Voltaire's ghost being welcomed in the Elysian fields is translated with the words "received at the Champs-Elysées," as if the philosopher were waiting for a table at Fouquet's. The French distinction between *homme politique* and *politicien* (the former denotes, roughly, a statesman-like politician, and the latter denotes a political operator), with which de Baecque introduces the chapter on Mirabeau, is utterly lost. Absurd gallicisms abound: "entrained a terrible pain," "immolated the sacredness," "ardent chapels," "restorer" for restaurant owner (*restaurateur*), and even "arrest" where de Baecque means "stop" (*arrêter*).

De Baecque's French is not always easy, particularly when he steps away from his subject matter and falls into the sort of slippery abstractions beloved of contemporary French social science. But his writing is usually fluid and often elegant, and much of *La gloire et l'effroi* is an extraordinarily gripping affair. Little of this comes across in the translation, and thus the essence of de Baecque's enterprise—a vivid, intense evocation of the revolutionary sources—is to a great extent lost.

But all is not quite lost. Readers interested in an example of the best history currently being written in France may still want to give *Glory and Terror* a try. De Baecque's historical method is original and provocative. His insights into the French Revolution are startling and fresh. And when it comes to the ghoulish recesses of the revolutionary imagination, he is one of the best guides since that contemporary expert in the macabre subject, the Marquis de Sade. ■

"... Into Something Rich and Strange"

Under influenza, gasping, self-estranged, I first confessed—*I love you*—while prostrate on Cousin Annie's rococo-style divan. Did you look so stricken

afterwards because I'd mentioned that her mother died on this Victorian coelacanth? Not exactly an auspicious omen, but your otherworldly Akhmatova face inspired me to blunder on. I thought *The course of true love never ... it's a common rule*

of thumb. I'd dreamt a more romantic dénouement, I must admit. That you'd clasp me in a mermaid's mythical

embrace and vow: *This change endures. The gills you grow will never turn to lungs again.*

Malcolm Farley

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Gifts

IT IS NOW SAFE TO TURN OFF YOUR COMPUTER. Millions have seen this message displayed on their PC screens. Viewing it, I always wonder in what sense it was not "safe" before. I once observed another memorable warning on the airplane safety instruction card of a 767. It announced: IF YOU CANNOT READ THIS CARD, NOTIFY FLIGHT ATTENDANT. (Notify in writing, perhaps?) But nothing tops the disclaimer I saw outside the window of a 737. There, prominently displayed on the engine housing, was the warning: CAUTION, DO NOT OPEN FAN COWLING UNTIL LEADING EDGE SLATS ARE RETRACTED. SEE INSTRUCTIONS INSIDE DOOR.

THESE DAYS, DISCLAIMERS AT THE end of movies assure you that no animals were harmed during filming. As *The Wall Street Journal* detailed in a hilarious recent article, Hollywood takes this vow seriously. Camera crews are not allowed to kill flies or ants; when a script requires dead insects, movie crews must find bugs that have died "naturally" (at the end, let's hope, of long, fulfilling lives). For the scene in *Cast Away* in which Tom Hanks spears a crab, modelers spent more than a month fabricating a mechanical crustacean so no real one had to be killed. And what did the caterer serve the cast while the clockwork-crab scene was being shot? Probably crab salad.

OF COURSE, IT'S A GOOD THING that horses are no longer pushed till they die during filming. Yet even as Hollywood congratulates itself for its excruciating animal-friendliness, every third film glamorizes the slaughter of human beings. Movies today rarely depict the mistreatment of animals, because filmmakers don't want to give audiences the wrong idea. Depicting screaming women slashed with knives, on the other hand—why, that's entertainment. The whole promotional campaign for last winter's big-studio hit *Hannibal* centered on boasts that the film sunk to new lows in its representation of extreme acts of cruelty, building up to a helpless FBI agent having his brain cut out and cooked while he was still alive. But no ants were harmed! If movies depicted the brutalization of animals in anything like the way they routinely depict the brutalization of men and women, activists would chain themselves to theaters.

THE *HANNIBAL* SCRIPT SHOULD HAVE wound up in the shredder, and it's apparently not alone. Paper shredders, it seems, are a growth industry—and not just for lawyers or corporate executives whose secretaries just buzzed to say, "There's someone from the SEC here." Kmart now sells shredders for the mass market, from a portable "travel" model (don't you hate it when you're on the road and can't find decent shredding facilities?) to a fancy "cross-cut" device that shreds so thoroughly that even teams of Iranian students will never be able to reassemble the KGB recruitment note, the Swiss bank account statement, or the escort-agency receipt (itemized, perhaps?) you have ground exceedingly small. Since most people never find themselves holding papers quite that clandestine, it's hard to understand why shredder sales are booming. Maybe owning one lets you fantasize yourself the next Marc Rich. Or maybe Americans have grown so fearful about invasions of privacy that a significant number really believe that government agents are sifting through their garbage. My guess is that there is so much materialistic superfluity in today's United States that retailers are desperate to push any product that the typical household does not already possess.

BUT, EVEN AS A RISING PERCENTAGE of Americans persuade themselves they need a personal paper shredder, it's depressing to think that scarcely one in 1,000 knows that Charles Hartshorne, likely to be judged among the leading twentieth-century philosophers, died last fall at the age of 103. Hartshorne, whom I knew slightly, was a gentle man of Quaker ancestry who studied with Alfred North Whitehead after World War I. His first achievement was editing the papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, rendering the dense logician comprehensible. Then Hartshorne began to carry the torch for "process theology," which holds that God is not immutable but changes in response to a future the divine cannot see. Hartshorne brilliantly enlarged this idea, using it to explain Christian scripture (why the divine transforms from vengeful in the Pentateuch to a gentle whisper in the Gospels) and humanistic duty (if God does not dictate events, then we are to blame for evil and responsible for one another's welfare). Hartshorne further swam against the intellectual current by advocating metaphysics—whose pursuit of abstract truth is finally making a comeback—during those desiccated decades when positivism and its successors declared everything contingent. Hartshorne's standing as a thinker was ratified when the *Library of Living Philosophers* devoted a volume to him in 1991; yet chances are you've never heard of this great man. Tastemakers shunned Hartshorne because he violated modernist taboo by arguing that God actually exists. Faith establishments shunned him because he maintained that the Maker must be imperfect.

HARTSHORNE WAS THE CLASSIC absentminded professor, never owning a car and, after a long stint at the University of Chicago, settling at the University of Texas partly because he could buy a house on the edge of campus and bicycle through a park to class. Hartshorne was a vegetarian and an advocate of feminism from the 1920s, and he published some of his best work—including the small masterpiece *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*—after the age of 80. He was married to the same woman for 67 years, until her death in 1995, and said his highest pleasure was sitting at the living-room piano while she performed arias for him alone. Hartshorne also had a second career as an accomplished ornithologist; his book-length study *Born to Sing* contends that some bird species possess an aesthetic sense and warble for pleasure—anticipating by almost half a century the current research that takes bird brainpower seriously.

THREE YEARS AGO I VISITED HARTshorne in Austin and learned that, at age 100, his mental clarity exceeded that of most smart people in their prime. He passed his twilight days rereading his work and attempting to compose a few more arguments for that essential metaphysical concept, the word *true*. Hartshorne said he faced death without fear because, though he doubted the afterlife, he believed human experiences are eternally remembered by God. "I had a happy, idyllic, old-fashioned childhood," he told me. "Go to the town where I spent that childhood, you will not find my happy hours there. Yet they remain definite constituents of a divine reality about which true statements can still be made. My happy childhood was a gift my parents and the world offered to God." Happiness on earth, Hartshorne held, is the offering the Maker wishes to receive from the made. I've no doubt God received and now gladly contemplates the magnificent gift of Charles Hartshorne's thoughts. We should do the same.

GREGG EASTERBROOK

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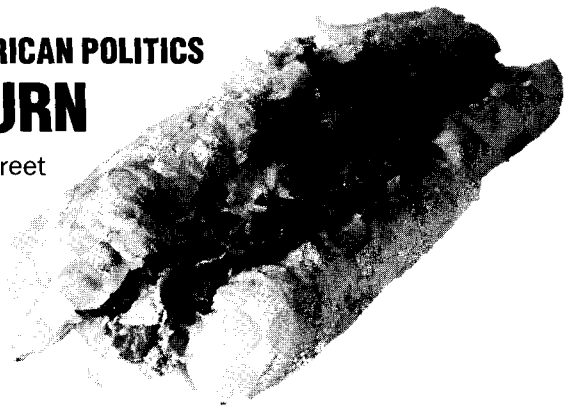
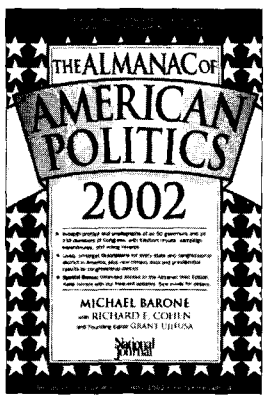
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT AMERICAN POLITICS

INCLUDING THE HEARTBURN



"The 1st runs north on both sides of the Broad Street corridor to include much of black North Philadelphia and south through most of heavily Italian South Philadelphia, where Italian families and their grocery stores and restaurants have been pressed tightly into narrow English and Indian-named streets under a tangle of overhead wires; this is the neighborhood where the various Rockys were filmed and the original Philadelphia cheesesteaks are sold."

—*The Almanac of American Politics on Pennsylvania's 1st Congressional District*



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